

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

N^o. 413.]

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1867.

[PRICE 2d.]

BLACK SHEEP!

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LAND AT LAST," "KISSING THE ROD," &c. &c.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER XV. AT THE TIDAL TRAIN.

"THERE'S a job for you to-day, Jim," said the irreproachable Harris to Mr. James Swain, when he presented himself at half-past eight at Routh's house, according to his frequent custom."

"I didn't come after no jobs this mornin'," said Jim; "I come to see the missis."

"Ah, but you can't see her, she ain't up, and the job is particular wanted to be done."

Jim looked moody and discontented, but cheered up when Harris represented that he might see Mrs. Routh on his return. The "job" was the delivery of Routh's clothes and letters, as directed, at his chambers in Tokenhouse-yard. The boy was troubled in his mind, irresolute. George Dallas's sudden illness, the photograph he had seen, these things added to the perplexity he was in already. Perhaps he had better speak to Mrs. Routh first; he did not know; at all events, he might tell her what had occurred yesterday, without mentioning the portrait, and see what effect it had upon her. He had thought about it all, until, between his imperfect knowledge of facts, his untaught intelligence, and his genuine but puzzled good will, he was quite bewildered. He had brought with him that morning, with a vague notion that it might perhaps be advisable to show it to Mrs. Routh, but a settled resolution to show it to Mr. Dallas, the object which he kept carefully secreted in the hole in the wall at home, and as he trudged away City-wards, carrying a small leather bag containing the required clothes and letters, he turned it over and over in his grimy pocket and grew more and more thoughtful and depressed.

Arrived at Tokenhouse-yard, the clerk took the bag from him, and suggested that he had better wait, in case Mr. Routh should require his further services. So Jim waited, and presently Routh came out into the passage. Jim's private opinion of Stewart Routh's character and disposition has been already stated; of his personal appearance he entertained an equally low one, and much opposed to the general

sentiment. "An ill-looking, down-looking dog, I call him," Jim had said to himself more than once; "more like the Pirate of the Persian Gulf, or the Bandit of Bokarer, I think, than anybody as I knows out of the pictures."

More ill-looking, more down-looking than ever Jim Swain thought Stewart Routh when he spoke to him that morning. His face was colourless, his eyes bloodshot, the glance troubled and wandering, his voice harsh and uneven. He gave Jim a brief order to meet him at the London-bridge railway station the same evening, at a quarter to six. "I shall have a message for you," said Routh. "Be punctual, remember." And then he turned away abruptly and went into his room, shutting the door roughly.

"He ain't in the best of humours, even of his own, and they're none on 'em good," thought Jim, as he turned out of Tokenhouse-yard and took his way westward again, keeping his hand permanently in his pocket this time. A fresh disappointment awaited him at Routh's house. Mrs. Routh had gone out immediately after she had breakfasted. Did she know he wanted to see her? Jim asked. Harris was rather tickled by the question.

"I say," he remarked, "you're getting on, Jim; you'll be as impident as a cock sparrow presently. I didn't happen to tell her; but, if I 'ad, do you think she'd a stayed in to give you the chance?"

"Yes I do; wot's more, I'm sure she would," said Jim, and walked moodily away, leaving Mr. Harris in a fine attitude of surprise upon the threshold. When that functionary finally left off looking after the boy, and shut the door, he did so to the accompaniment of a prolonged whistle.

It was only ten o'clock, and Jim had been told to go to Mr. Dallas's at eleven. The interval troubled him; he could not settle his mind to the pursuit of odd jobs. He did not mind "hanging about;" he would hang about Piccadilly till the time came. But when Jim reached the house in which Mr. Felton and Mr. Dallas lodged, he was surprised to find it an object of lively curiosity to a number of persons who were crowding the pavement, notwithstanding the active interference of a policeman, endeavouring to clear a passage for two ladies whose carriage was before the

door, and one of whom was evidently in the deepest distress. Jim plunged at once into the heart of the concourse, and asked a number of eager questions, to which he received simultaneous but contradictory replies.

"He's dead!" "No he isn't." "He's his brother, I tell you; I heard the cook a-tellin' the milk-boy." "He ain't his brother; the old 'un's his uncle; and he's been and murdered his cousin." Such were a few of the sentences Jim caught as his curiosity and anxiety rose to frenzy.

"Wot is it? wot is it? Do tell me. Is anything wrong with Mr. Dallas?" he asked imploringly of the servant who had opened the door to the two ladies (who had at last succeeded in entering the house), and was just about to shut it in the faces of a few scores of anxious inquirers endeavouring to pierce the depths of the hall, and to see through the dining-room doors. "Don't you know me? I was here yesterday. I have been here before. I was to see Mr. Dallas at eleven. Can't I see him? Is he worse?"

The woman did know the boy, and she at once admitted him.

"Come in," she said; "I'll tell you inside. It's a deal worse than his health that's the matter." So Jim vanished into the house, a distinction which, being unattainable by themselves, was regarded with much indignation by the crowd. Temporarily dispersed by the active policeman, they gathered again, hoping the boy would come out, when they might pounce upon and extract information from him. But they waited in vain; the boy did not come out. The carriage still remained at the door, and in about an hour a gentleman of grave and busy aspect issued from the maddeningly mysterious mansion, stepped into the vehicle, and was driven rapidly away. The crowd was not in luck; no one heard the order given to the coachman. Then such silence and desolation as can ever fall on Piccadilly fell upon the scene, and the gay looking, brightly decorated house obstinately hid its secret.

The woman who recognised Jim told him the story of the events which had occurred, in the hall, speaking in a hurried whisper and with much genuine womanly compassion. Jim heard her with a beating heart and shaking limbs. As the boy leaned against the wall, regardless of the damaging properties of his tousled head resting on the spotless paint, he wondered if this was like fainting, and whether he should be able to keep from "going off" like Mr. Dallas.

"We're strangers to Mr. Felton, of course," said the woman; "and it's natural everybody as can should like to keep their troubles to themselves, for it don't do no good tellin' of 'em, and people don't think no more of you; but there's things as can and things as can't be hid, and them as can't has been a takin' place here."

"Yes," said Jim, faintly; for the words he

had heard in the crowd were ringing in his ears; "yes, yes; but tell me——"

"I'll tell you, as plain as I can make it out. Mr. Felton had some letters yesterday—letters as come from America—and there were a carte of his son in 'em; he hasn't seen nor yet heard of him for ever so long; and when Mr. Dallas see the carte he knew as the man was the same as was murdered, and never found out, in the spring."

"Well?" said Jim. "Yes? Go on." The faint feeling was subsiding; he was beginning to understand.

"It were an awful shock for Mr. Dallas to find out as his cousin had been murdered, and to have to break it to the father; and no wonder he fainted over it. Nobody knows how he did it, but there must have been a dreadful scene; for I shouldn't ha' known Mr. Felton from the dead when I went to ask, through their not answering James's knock, whether they was a goin' to have any dinner. He was sittin' in his chair, white and quiet; and Mr. Dallas—he as had been took so bad himself in the beginnin'—he was kneeling on the ground beside him, and I think his arm was round his neck; but I couldn't see his face, for he only put out his hand, and says he, 'No, thank you, Mary; go away for a little, please.' I waited in the passage, but I never heard a word pass between them; and we didn't know whatever could be the matter, for we only knew about the letters after Mr. Dallas had been took up."

"Mr. Dallas took up? They said that outside, but I thought it must be their larks. Wot-ever do you mean? Go on—go on; tell me—quick!"

"It's quite true; no larks at all. It might be about eight or nine, and we was all sittin' down-stairs, a talkin' about the parlours, and a very quick ring comes to the 'all door. James opens it, and in comes two men, very short and business-like, which they must see Mr. Dallas, and can't take no denial. So James goes to the door to ask if Mr. Dallas will see them, but they're too quick for James, and walk in; and in two minutes there's a great to do and explanation, and Mr. Dallas is took up."

"But wot for?—wot had he done?" asked Jim.

"Murdered his cousin, don't I tell you!" said the woman, a little snappishly. "Ain't I a-tellin' of you as plain as I can speak. He'd been and murdered this other gentleman wot nobody knew, in the spring, and then he sets the police a lookin' after his cousin, and just tells them enough to make them know as the other gentleman was him, which they'd never had a notion of before, so they come and took him on suspicion of the murder, and Mr. Felton went away with him. We was all there when they put the handcuffs on him, and his uncle he stopped him in the 'all, as they was goin' to the cab, and says he, 'George, my boy, I do this, that no one may think I'm deceived,' and he

puts his hands on his shoulders and kisses him, as if he was a woman, before us all."

Jim listened, pale and breathless, but quite silent.

"Mr. Felton were out pretty near all night; and when he come 'ome, the gentleman as is here now were with him. He hasn't been to bed at all, and I haven't seen him, but just when I let the lady in, which she's a sweet lookin' creature, and has been eryin' dreadful."

"Let me see Mr. Felton," said Jim, catching the woman by her dress, and speaking with the utmost eagerness and passion, "let me see him. I came to see Mr. Dallas about this business, let me see Mr. Felton."

"You came! why what have you got to do with it?" said the woman; her curiosity vehemently aroused.

"I will tell you all about it," said Jim, adroitly; "you shall hear it all afterwards—a curious story as any one ever had to tell. Mr. Dallas never did it—not he, I know better than that. I can tell Mr. Felton a great deal."

"I must ask if he will see you," said the woman; "if he won't, perhaps the lawyer——"

"No, no, it must be Mr. Felton himself. Let me into the room."

She offered no resistance, and in another minute Jim was in the presence of a group composed of Mr. Felton, a grave gentleman, who looked like a lawyer, a beautiful girl, who was Clare Carruthers, and a plain, clever-looking young woman, who was Clare's cousin, Mrs. Stanhope. The lawyer and Mr. Stanhope were seated by a table, in close conversation, which they carried on in lowered tones. Clare and Mr. Felton stood upon the hearth-rug, the girl's golden head was resting on her companion's shoulder, and she was crying silently, but unrestrained.

"Is he very, very ill?" she had said, a little before Jim entered the room.

"Not seriously so, my dear, and indeed nothing could be more fortunate than that his strength failed him so completely. It gives us time, and I need it, I am so bewildered even yet."

"Did Mr. Lowther say—say that he was not—not brought before the magistrates, not brought into that dreadful place, to-day?" said Clare, her voice hardly audible for her sobs.

"Yes, my dear. Think a little; I could not be here if he had not so much respite. Clare, I am a chief witness; I must be there, you know, to tell them about—about my son——" he paused, and closed his eyes for a few minutes.

"The case was called pro forma this morning, but Mr. Lowther's partner, his brother, easily procured a delay. George was too ill to appear, but he sent me word that there was nothing seriously wrong."

"Can no one see him?" asked Clare, imploringly. "Oh, Mr. Felton, can no one go to him? Can no one give him any comfort—help him to bear it? Are they so cruel as that, are they so cruel?"

"Hush, dear, it is not cruel; it is right. No one can see him for the present but Mr. Lowther—Mr. James Lowther, who is with him now, I dare say, who will be here this afternoon."

"How can you bear it? how are you ever to bear it?" she said.

"My dear, I must bear it; and I have time before me in which to suffer: this is the time for action. You must help me, Clare, my dear, brave girl. I sent for you for this; I sent for you, at his desire, my child. His last words were, 'My mother, my mother, she is coming home to-morrow.' I told him to be satisfied, she should be kept from the knowledge of all this." He shuddered from head to foot. "Clare, are you strong enough to redeem my promise? Can you hide all that has happened from her? Can you be with her, watching her, keeping a calm face before her? My dear, have you strength for this?"

She lifted her golden head, and looked at him with her innocent fearless eyes.

"I have strength to do anything that he—that George desires, and you think is right."

"Then that is your share of our dreadful task, my dear. God knows it is no light or easy share."

Clare's tears streamed forth again. She nestled closer to him, and whispered:

"Is there no—no hope?"

"None, he replied. "If it had been possible for George to be mistaken, I have had the sight of my own eyes. Clare, they brought me my son's coat! Ay, like Jacob, they brought me my son's coat. My own last gift to him, Clare." His eyes were dry and bright, but their sockets had deepened since the day before, and his voice had the febrile accent of intense grief and passion restrained by a powerful will.

"What George must have suffered!" she said, still in a broken whisper, her tear-stained face upon his breast.

"Ah, yes, it is all dim to me still. Mr. Lowther and I have been searching out the truth all night, but we are still in confusion. Tatlow is coming presently, and you must go away, my dear, you must go home. You have your share to do, and need strength to do it. You shall know all I learn from hour to hour. Mrs. Stanhope, will you—who is this? What brings you here, boy?"

"Sir," stammered Jim, who, though he had the wizened mannish look peculiar to his tribe, was only a boy, and was desperately frightened—"sir, I came to tell you that I know the man as didn't do it, and I know the man as did."

Mr. Felton loosed his hold of Clare, and came forward. Mr. Lowther rose hurriedly from his seat: he did not share the blank, incredulous surprise of Mr. Felton. The two ladies drew near each other.

"Who are you?" asked Mr. Lowther.

Jim told him.

"What are you come for? What——" began Mr. Felton; but Mr. Lowther made a sign to him to be silent, and addressing Jim in a quiet,

friendly voice, took him by the arm and led him to a chair.

"Sit down there, my boy," he said, "and don't be afraid. You must have come here of your own free will, and we do not doubt you have come for a good purpose. You have something important to tell Mr. Felton. You know Mr. Dallas, I think, and I gather from what you said just now that you know what he is accused of." Jim assented by a downcast nod. "There, tell us all about it. Take your time, and don't get frightened." So saying, and giving the boy a reassuring pat upon the shoulder, the lawyer sat down upon a chair opposite to Jim, and spread his hands upon his knees in an attitude of serious, but not stern, attention. The two women looked on in silent suspense, and Mr. Felton, guided by a glance from Mr. Lowther, moved a little to the back of the chair on which Jim was seated.

"Come," said Mr. Lowther, giving him another pat, "we are all anxious to hear what you have got to say. Speak up, my boy."

"Sir," began Jim, "I should like to ask you something first. Is it true, as the gentleman as was murdered was Mr. Dallas's own cousin?"

"Only too true. He was Mr. Felton's son," and the lawyer eyed the unhappy father, as if measuring the strength he could command to bear this new trial. Mr. Felton came to Jim's side, and touched him kindly on the arm.

"Don't be afraid to speak before me," he said. "You may; and don't keep us waiting any longer, my good boy."

Then Jim made a desperate effort, and told his story; told it in his ignorant blundering fashion, told it with circumlocution and hesitation, but never interrupted. Mr. Lowther heard him without a word, and held Mr. Felton and the two women silent by the unspoken counsel of his glance.

"I had done many an odd job at the house in South Molton-street," said the boy, when he had told them a good deal about himself, in a rambling way, "and I knowed Mr. Routh well, but I don't suppose he knowed me; and when I saw him a-lingerin' about the tavern, and a-lookin' in at the winder, he wosn't no stranger to me. Well, he giv' me the letter, and I giv' it to the gentleman. He had a beard as came down in a point, and was sharp with me, but not so sharp as the waiter, as I giv' him his own sauce, and the gentleman laughed, and seemed as if he didn't object to me holdin' of my own; but Mr. Dallas, which I didn't know his name then, he didn't laugh, and he asks the gentleman if there weren't no answer, and the gentleman says no, there weren't none, and somehow I seemed to know as he wanted to spite Mr. Routh. So I felt cur'ous about it, partickler when I see as Mr. Routh looked savage when I came out of the coffee-room and told him there weren't no answer. You must understand," said Jim, who had regained his composure now, and was in the full tide of his discourse, which he addressed exclusively to Mr. Lowther, with the instinctive delicacy which

Harriet Routh had once observed in the neglected boy, "as I was not to say he was there, I were merely to give the note. He giv' me sixpence, and he went away down the Strand. I got a horse-holdin' job just then, and it were a long 'un; and there I was when the two gents came to the door, a-smokin' their cigars, and then the gent as I held his horse took him from me, and I hadn't nothin' better to do than follow them, which I did; for who should I see but Mr. Routh a-skulkin' along the other side of the Strand, as if he wanted to keep 'em in sight without their seein' of him. I follered them, sir, and follered them feelin' as if I was one of them 'ere wild Ingins in the 'Alfpenny' Alf-hours on a trail, until I follered them to Boyle's billiard-rooms, as I knows it well, and had swep it often on a Sunday mornin'. They went in, and I was tired of hangin' about, and was goin' away, when I see Mr. Routh again; there weren't nobody in the street but him and me. I skulked into a lane, and watched him. I don't know why I watched him, and I don't know how long we was there—I a little way down the lane, and he a saunterin' up and down, and lookin' at the doors and the windows, but never goin' nigh the house. It must ha' been very late when the two gents came out, and I was very tired; but the old woman—that's my aunt, sir—and me had had a row in the mornin', and I thought I'd like to giv' her a fright, and stay out all night, which I haven't often slep in the streets, considerin'."

Jem had ceased to wriggle about on his chair, to twist his cap between his hands, and to shuffle his feet upon the floor. He was nearly as motionless as the listeners, who heard him in breathless silence. By degrees Clare had drawn nearer to Mr. Felton, and she was now standing, her hand in his, her head in its former place upon his shoulder, behind Jim's chair. But the character of the group formed by the two was no longer what it had been; the girl was supporting the man now; the girl was silently nerving him to courage and resolution.

"They came out, sir," the boy continued, "very friendly-like and good humoured, and Mr. Dallas, he were a-laughin', and he shook hands with the other gent, which he called himself Mr. Deane—it were on the note; and he went away whistlin' down the very lane as I was in, passed me close, and never saw me. I saw him, though, quite plain, and I thought, 'You've been winnin', and you likes it;' but still I had my eye on Mr. Routh, and presently I sees him speakin' to the other gent, as was puttin' on his big fur coat, which it had a 'ood to it as I never see one like it afore. I thought they wouldn't be pleasant together, and they wasn't, not to judge by their voices, and I heard the other gent give a sneerin' kind of a laugh, which were aggravatin'; and soon they walked away together, through the Bar and up Fleet-street, and I follered 'em, for I thought I'd sleep under the dry arch of the bridge, and get

a chance of odd jobs at the early trains in the mornin', which they're profitable if you ain't too tired. They was talkin' and talkin', and the oddest thing was that I knew they was quarrellin', though I couldn't hear a word they said, and I knew the other gent was a-sneerin' and a-aggravatin' of Mr. Routh, and yet they was arm-in-arm all the time like brothers. They went on, and there wasn't a livin' bein' in the street but them and me and an odd p'liceman or so, wot took no notice, only beat their 'ands together and passed by. All on a sudden, when they was near the bridge, and close to all the little narrow streets down there, I gets tired, and don't seem to care about follerin' of 'em; and then, while I'm thinkin' of makin' for the dry arch, I misses of 'em, and they're gone."

The boy stood up now, and his cap fell unheeded on the floor. The embarrassment, the confusion, the vulgarity of his manner were gone; he met the lawyer's piercing gaze unabashed; he lifted his hand and moved it with an expressive gesture.

"It was gettin' light overhead, and I was tired, and my head begin to turn. I sat down in a doorway; there wasn't no one to move me on, and I must ha' fell asleep, for I don't remember any more until I heard something pass by me very quick, quite near me, as near as Mr. Dallas passed me in the lane. I looked up pretty smart, and, sir, it were a man."

"Mr. Routh?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, sir, it were Mr. Routh. His head were down, and he was goin' as quick as any man could walk, short of runnin', but he did not run. I roused up, and wondered where the other gent was, and then I see a narrow passage a little way off the doorway where I was a settin', leadin' straight to the river. I thought they must ha' turned down there to have their talk out, when I missed them so sudden. I went down the passage, and at the end of it was stones and mud and the river; and there was no one there. But oh, sir!" and here Jim began to tremble and to look nervously round towards Mr. Felton, "there were blood on the edge of the stones, and footsteps in the mud where the water was a-creepin' up, and there was no one there."

A convulsive sob burst from Clare's lips; but Mr. Felton clasped her closer to him, and kept her quiet.

"A dreadful sight—a dreadful discovery," said Mr. Lowther; "but, my boy," and again he touched Jim gently on the arm, "why did you conceal it? Did you not understand the crime that had been committed? Did you not know all that happened afterwards?"

"Sir," said Jim, boldly, but not without an effort, "I was not sure; I thought it might have been a fight, and that ain't murder anyways. I didn't know as how it had been stabbin' until I see it in Lloyd's Weekly, for I kep' away on purpose."

Here Jim put his hand into his pocket, and drew it out again closed round some object

which he had still a lingering reluctance to show.

"I'll tell you all the truth, sir, though I dare say I must get into trouble. If it hadn't been as I was afraid of gettin' into it, I should ha' spoke before when I see Mrs. Routh, as is a good lady, a-frettin' herself to death, and him a-deceivin' of her. When I was a-lookin' close at the stones and the mud, and the blood upon 'em, which the tide was very nigh upon it afore I came away, I see somethin' nearly stamped into the mud as looked like gold, and I fished it out, and I knew it were somethin' as I had seen hangin' on the other gent's chain, which he was a-twiddlin' on it with his fingers when I giv' him the note in the coffee-room. I fished it out, sir, and I kep' it, and I was afraid to take it to the pawnshop when I heerd as the body was found; and as it were a murder, I was afraid to sell it neither, and I hid it in the wall, and—and," said Jim, speaking with great rapidity and earnestness, "I am glad I've told the truth, for Mr. Dallas's sake, and I'm ready to suffer for it, if I must. Here it is, sir." Then the boy unclosed his hand, and placed in that of Mr. Lowther a locket in the form of a golden egg.

"It opens in the middle," said Jim, "and there's pictures in it: one is Mr. Deane's, and the other is a lady's. I know where she lives, and I saw Mr. Routh with her on Monday night. Mr. Routh has another, just the same as tuis, on the outside anyways."

"Do you recognise this trinket?" asked Mr. Lowther of Mr. Felton, who replied:

"I do. It was my son's."

A few minutes of close and anxious consultation between the gentlemen followed, and then Mr. Lowther, telling Jim that he must remain with Mr. Felton until his return, went out, and was driven away in Mrs. Stanhope's carriage. Mr. Felton and the two women treated the boy with kind consideration. In the frightful position in which they were all placed, there was now a prospect of relief, not, indeed, from the tremendous calamity, but from the dreadful danger, and Jim, as the medium through which the hope shone, was very valuable to them. Food was given him, of a quality rare to the street-boy, and he ate it with sufficient appetite. Thus the time passed, until Mr. Lowther returned, accompanied by a small, smart man in a grey suit, who was no other than Mr. Tatlow, and whose first words to Mr. Felton were:

"It's all right, sir. We've got the other warrant."

Then Mr. Felton sent Clare and her cousin away, and Jim, having been cheered and consoled by many a reassuring word and promise from Mr. Felton, whose strength and self-control proved themselves to the utmost on this occasion, underwent a long and searching examination from Mr. Lowther and the self-congratulatory Tatlow.

The afternoon was already advanced, and Mr. Tatlow had gone away and returned again,

when the boy's explanation was concluded, and the plans formed upon it were finally arranged. Then the lawyer's quick eye noticed symptoms of giving way in Mr. Felton. There were many hours of excitement and strain upon the nerves still to be endured, and not yet might he be free to face the grief which was his, pre-eminently his, not yet must he seek solitude, to mourn for his only son. Anguish, fear, and fatigue were setting their mark upon him, but he must not yet have even bodily rest?

"You will not come with us?" said Mr. Lowther.

"No," replied Mr. Felton, with an irrepressible shudder. "I could not see that man before I must."

"You will lie down and rest?"

"Not yet. I will rest to-night. I must see my brother-in-law, who will reach London this evening, and tell him all that has happened."

"Your brother-in-law?"

"Mr. Carruthers, my sister's husband. Much depends on George's mother being kept in ignorance, and Mr. Carruthers must be prepared."

During this short dialogue, Jim had been speaking earnestly to Mr. Tatlow, apparently urging very strongly an earnest appeal. On its cessation, Mr. Tatlow addressed Mr. Lowther.

"He agrees to everything, if one of you gentlemen will write to Mrs. Routh for him. That's it, ain't it?" said he, turning again to Jim.

"Yes, sir," said the boy, with an earnestness of entreaty in his voice and his look which touched the listeners. "If one of you will write to her. I don't mean a letter of your own—grand like—for then she mightn't believe it, and she might think as I was paid. I did it for Mr. Dallas, but I don't think as I should have done it if he hadn't been bad to her, and if I hadn't seen her a-dyin' day after day, as courageous as can be, but still a-dyin', and he a-neglectin' of her first and deceivin' of her after."

"She is this man's accomplice," said Mr. Lowther, moodily.

"Perhaps so, to a certain extent," said Mr. Felton; "but she is to be pitied, too. I saw that. I saw a little way into her life at Hom-burg, and, from all George has told me, I would be as little hard with her as possible. He cannot escape us, she cannot shield him; let us hear what the boy wishes to say to her, and then decide. Tell me," he said, kindly, to Jim, "what do you wish to say to this lady?"

"You must understand," said Mr. Tatlow, "that you can't send your letter till we've got him."

"I don't want to, sir," said Jim; "I think as he's runnin' away from her to-night, partik'lar as the lady is gone."

(Mr. Tatlow had ascertained the fact of Mrs. P. Ireton Bembridge's departure during his brief absence.)

"He didn't go home last night, and I think

as he's afraid to face her, and is runnin' away to-night."

"Very well, then," said Mr. Lowther, "I will write the letter. You shall tell me what to say, and it shall be sent to her this evening."

So Jim dictated, with infinite difficulty and astonishing slowness, and Mr. Lowther wrote:

"Dear Ma'am. This comes from Jim Swain, as wouldn't like to hurt you, but has to tell at last, because of Mr. Dallas being took for what he didn't do. I wanted to see you to-day, but you was out, and I couldn't, and I come down here and heard of Mr. Dallas being took. You weren't in it, dear ma'am, I'm sure, and so I have told the gentlemen and Mr. Tatlow, which has me in charge at present; but you know it, and that Mr. Dallas did not do it, and Mr. Routh did. I followed them all the night it was done, and I saw Mr. Deane and Mr. Routh going down to the river, and I went down to the river, when one was gone away alive and the other couldn't be found, only his blood on the stones, and I found the gold thing he had on his chain, which the gentleman has it now, and Mr. Routh have the same in a little drawer in the big desk in the parlour. I haven't hid anything, dear ma'am, and Mr. Routh will be took, at six o'clock, at the railway, where he told me to meet him, which so I am to do. I know about a lady, too, which her picture is in the gold thing, and I would have told you about her if I could have seen you to-day. I hope you won't be hurt. I didn't mean to do it to hurt you. I wish I hadn't been so secret so long."

When Jim had formally made his mark, the letter was sealed and directed, and Mr. Lowther took charge of it.

Considerably before the platform of the London-bridge railway station, from which the tidal train for Folkstone was about to start, had received the usual crowd of passengers and their friends, a lady, plainly dressed, and closely veiled, made her unobtrusive appearance upon it. "I am waiting to see a friend off," she had said, as the official at the barrier questioned her, and she attracted no further notice. Slowly and with downcast eyes, and hands which clasped each other closely under her shawl, she walked up and down, keeping close to the wall, and allowing the groups, as they began to form, to form between her and the edge of the platform. Once or twice she unclasped her hands, and lifted her veil, and breathed deeply; then, after one piercing glance, which comprehended every face under the roof within its vision, dropped it again. Once, as she did this, a nursemaid with a child in her arms at the back of the platform noticed her, and said to a fellow-servant,

"That woman's face is enough to frighten one; she looks like death!"

But life was strong in Harriet Routh, and hope was strong in her also, a terrible hope,

indeed, which to any suffering less than hers, would have worn the semblance of despair. A little while now and he would be safe, safe for the present, for the next few hours, which were so all-important. The letter she had written, telling him all she had done, and why, would await him at Amiens, and show him that all his plans were vain, would convince him, at last. The arrangement of his money matters, which he must have made for the flight he contemplated, would avail in the case of this flight which she had imposed upon him. A little more torture, a little more suspense, and something like rest would come. Perhaps she should be able to sleep a little to-night, while he would be speeding through the darkness to safety. Something like a forlorn sense of peace came to her with the anticipation. So she walked up and down, thinking these thoughts, and sometimes lapsing into a mental blank, out of which condition she would come with a start, to go into a kind of vision of the last two days—of the woman she had so completely mastered—of the last time she had seen her husband's face—of the blow he had struck her; but she felt no anger in the remembrance; what did it matter now, in the face of this great crisis? It was strange that she had heard nothing of George, and the fact rendered her only the more eager and apprehensive. He was busy with the investigation, which must end in—what? In that which she had now effectually prevented. So she walked up and down, thinking, and the platform became peopled, and all the fuss and hurry of the departure of the tidal train was around her. Presently, as she reached the end of the platform, and turned, to resume her walk, she saw her husband, coming quickly towards the line of carriages, carrying the small bag which had been sent to him at Tokenhouse-yard in the morning, and which she had packed with reference to this occasion. Routh, indeed, had been not a little surprised by its contents. He came along the platform, the bag in one hand, a letter in the other, looking frowningly round, as though in search of somebody. She shrank back, as much out of sight as possible. Presently, just as he was stepping into a carriage, Jim Swain appeared, and went up to him. A few words passed between them, and then Harriet saw two persons, one of whom was a smart, slightly built man in a grey suit, address him. Straining her eyes with a fixed intensity of gaze which made her brain ache, she looked. He tore the letter in his hand to pieces, with inconceivable quickness, the fragments fluttering to the ground, turned, and with one of his unknown interlocutors on either side, and Jim following—how strange the boy looked, Harriet thought—walked along the platform, passed through the barrier, and was lost to her gaze at the distant entrance.

Harriet stood rooted to the spot. It was not until all the passengers had taken their places, and the train had gone off with a shriek and a pant, that she had the power to move. Then a moan of utter despair burst from her

white lips, and a cold thrill shook her limbs, as she murmured:

"He has been called back on business, and he is lost, utterly lost!"

ODD WATCHES.

FROM the period when men began to wear pocket clocks, as they were at first called, but watches or time-watchers, as they were afterwards designated, all sorts of fanciful vagaries were indulged in by the makers and wearers; as if a new shape for a watch were as naturally to be looked for as new fashions in hats or boots, or new modes of dressing viands for the table. Whoever wishes to know all about escapements, movements, chains, pendulums, fuseses, balances, arbors, ratchet-wheels, mainsprings, stops, repeating, going, winding, compensation, jewelling, capping, and so forth, in relation to their peculiarities and first introduction, will find abundant to satisfy him in Mr. Wood's "Curiosities of Clocks and Watches;" but some of the changes in form and mode of watch-achievement may be grouped here.

Early watchmakers, patronising the vegetable kingdom, adopted the forms of fruits and flowers. In the Bernal collection (a rare medley of artistic odds and ends) there was a Nuremberg watch in the shape of a pear, in parcel-gilt silver. Another, shaped like a melon, was made by a Frenchman. It is only one inch and a quarter in diameter, and has a key in form of a melon-leaf. At the South Kensington Museum is a very small apple-shaped watch, about a century old, with a gold enamel case studded with seed pearls. One of the old watches of Nuremberg has the form of an acorn, and is provided with a small wheel-lock pistol, which is supposed to have been used as an alarm. One watch, talked about by the archaeologists, is in the shape of a tulip, with three crystal faces. Another, having the same form, but scarcely an inch in diameter, is so constructed that the leaves or petals of the flower open a little at the bottom of the watch—disclosing a small spring, which, when pressed, pushes up the lid and shows the dial-face.

Mr. Bernal had a watch in which the works were contained within the body of a tiny eagle; the imitative bird opened across the centre, and displayed a richly engraved dial-plate, while the exterior was rendered classical by the story of Jupiter and Ganymede; it might either be worn suspended from the girdle by a ring, or be rested on a table by means of three claws. Ducks have sometimes had a share of watchmakers' attention bestowed upon them—witness a duck-shape watch about two inches and a half long, in the South Kensington Museum, and another in a private collection, in which the feathers of the duck are chased in silver, and the lower half, when opened, exhibits a dial-face decked with jewels.

A whole class of watches were for genera-

tions known as Nuremberg eggs. One, supposed to have belonged to our wise-foolish James the First, is of a flattish egg-shape, the outer case plain, the inner elaborately engraved; the face has a calendar, and wherewithal for showing the moon's age. Another, existing in a private collection, is an egg cut out of a jacinth, with the dial-face visible through the transparent jewel—a very beautiful mode of indulging in these crotchets. In the Dover Museum is a double-cased egg-watch with two movable dials, one for showing the hours of the day in the usual fashion, and the other for the names and days of the month; there are also means for denoting the day of the week and the position of the sun in the zodiac; and—an oddity indeed—the hands go the reverse way from those in ordinary watches, or from right to left, as if the artist's notion of time took a backward direction. In Hollar's set of four engravings of the Four Seasons, a lady is represented in the character of Summer, with an egg-watch suspended from her girdle.

Surely the most dismal of all watches must have been those shaped in the form of a skull or death's head, intended doubtless as mementoes of the fleetness of time and the brevity of man's existence. Many examples of this class are contained in various public and private collections. One of these, small in size, is of silver, and has a ring at the top to suspend it from the girdle; the lower jaw of the skull opens, and there displays the dial-face. Another of the doleful family, made in the seventeenth century, opens at the lower jaw to show what's o'clock, and has inscriptions ("Incertite hora," "Æsterna respice") on the outside. When Diana of Poitiers became mistress to Henry the Second of France, she was a widow; and the courtiers of the sovereign, to ingratiate themselves with the favourite, wore death's-head watches as a kind of complimentary mourning. But the most celebrated death's-head watch, once belonging to Mary Queen of Scots, was that which the royal lady gave to Mary Seaton, her maid of honour, and which afterwards came into the possession of Sir Thomas Dick Lauder. It is of silver gilt. The forehead of the skull bears the symbols of death, the scythe, and the hour-glass, placed between a palace and a cottage, to show the impartiality of the grim destroyer; at the back of the skull is Time destroying all things, and at the top of the head are scenes of the Garden of Eden and the Crucifixion. The watch is opened by reversing the skull, placing the upper part of it in the hollow of the hand, and lifting the jaw by a hinge: this part being enriched by engraved representations of the Holy Family, angels, and shepherds with their flocks. The works of the watch form the brains of the skull, and are within a silver envelope, which acts as a musically-toned bell; while the dial-plate serves as the palate. This very curious work of art, which was made at Blois, is too large to be carried as a pocket watch.

Some of the old watchmakers were remarkably smitten with a taste for astronomy, dealing with the heavenly bodies in a way which modern watches seldom aspire to. There is an oval silver watch by Dupont, with index hands to show the hour of the day, the day of the week, the day of the month, and the age of the moon, while there are other arrangements for denoting something about the constellations; and inside the cover are a sun-dial and a compass. Jean Baptiste Duboule, of Geneva, made a large watch, which denotes the four parts of the day, the hour of the day, the day of the week, the day of the month, the name of the month, the sign of the zodiac, the age of the moon, the phase of the moon, and the four seasons of the year; far too complex probably, to be really reliable as an astronomical guide, seeing that the smallest disarrangement in any little wheel would throw sun, moon, and earth into awful catastrophe. More practicable was a watch made by a Polish peasant, Kuhaiesky, at Warsaw, which denoted the time at different places under different longitudes—a contrivance which we have seen imitated in a modern English watch. One of these mechanical conundrums was found among the loot of the Emperor of China's summer palace at Pekin, when captured by the English; it was of the time of Louis the Sixteenth, and is supposed to have been presented to the Son of the Sun and Moon by that sovereign; it was a telescope enriched with pearls and enamels; but when we are told that "the object-glass is formed of a watch set with pearls," we confess to being puzzled.

Some good people in past times affected the wearing of watches in ways not often adopted just now. Archbishop Parker, in a will drawn up in Latin rather less than three centuries ago, said: "I give to my reverend brother Richard, Bishop of Ely, my stick of Indian cane which hath a watch in the top of it." Several other walking-stick watches are still preserved in collections of bijouterie; while watches in rings are still more common. One of the Electors of Saxony used to have a watch in his saddle. The Earl of Leicester gave to Queen Elizabeth, as a new year's gift, "one armlet or shakell of golde, all over fairly garnished with rubyes and dymondes, haveing in the closing thereof a clock,"—that is, having a watch in the clasp. The courtly dames of those times often carried a watch suspended to a chatellaine, with keys, seals, miniatures, brologues, &c. Cruciform watches were much coveted by pious persons, who revered the symbolism embodied in them. One such, about two centuries old, is called a montre d'Abbesse, and is supposed to have been made for the lady superior of a religious house; its surface bears numerous scriptural designs in relief. Another, however, which was in the Bernal collection, had quite as much heathenism as scripturalism about it: seeing that it was engraved with figures of Diana and Endymion. Once now and then ladies wore watches in the form of a book, the

cover being pierced to show the hours on the dial.

All sorts of ingenuity were exercised in selecting the materials, forms, and arrangements of watches. They were, as is well known, brought into use as substitutes for the hour-glass which was wont to be carried by professors, judges, and other persons who required easy means of determining the lapse of an hour or any aliquot part of an hour. When the real watch was first introduced there was no metal chain connected with the mainspring, its place being supplied by catgut. A watch of this kind was given by Mary Queen of Scots to an attendant on the night before her execution. Some of the watches were made of crystal, to render the beautiful mechanism of the works visible. Some have had the twelve letters of the maker's or owner's name to do duty for the twelve figures on the dial. Some were pedometer watches, one form of which is still used. Napoleon had one that wound itself up by means of a weighted lever which rose and fell at every step; but those now made are for measuring speed in walking, which can only be useful to those who make regular steps of given length, a known number of which equal a mile. Some are *touch* watches, to be used in the dark or by blind persons. There are twelve projecting studs round the rim of the case; an index hand, at the back, when moved forward, stops at the portion of the hour indicated by the dial; and the index and studs together enable the time to be felt by the fingers.

The attempts to produce sounds of various kinds in a watch have been numerous. The celebrated French maker, Breguet, was famous for repeating watches of this kind; and the sovereigns of Europe were ready enough to give him two or three hundred guineas for one. Of course alarums are more simple, seeing that the mechanism is required merely to ring a bell at some definite and pre-arranged hour in advance. Charles the First kept an alarm watch at his bedside at night; the outer case enclosed two silver bells which struck the hours and quarters. M. Rangouet, a French maker, about a century ago, is credited with the construction of a musical watch, of the common pocket size, which played duets, and the works of which were so nicely adjusted that the musical portion and the time-measuring portion did not interfere with each other. This is far surpassed by a watch, about the size of an egg, constructed by a Russian peasant in the time of the Empress Catherine the Second, and now preserved in the Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg. This elaborate work is both a repeating watch and a watch that performs a chant. Inside is a representation of the tomb of Christ, with Roman sentinels on guard. On pressing a spring, a stone rolls away from the tomb, the sentinels fall down, angels appear, holy women enter the sepulchre, and sing the same chant which is still sung in the Russo-Greek church on Easter Eve. A story is told of some missionaries at Tongataboo which

shows that the exhibitors of talking and singing watches are apt to find their own reputation rise and fall with that of the mechanism itself. The real instrument was a cuckoo clock, but it would apply to watches as well. The natives believed that the missionaries' cuckoo clocks were inhabited by a spirit, and regarded them accordingly with reverential awe. One of them, bolder than the rest, picked one of the clocks to pieces to have a peep at the spirit. Of course he could not put it together again; and the fame of the missionaries was damaged when it was found that *they* also were powerless in the matter. There is some mention made of watches which actually talked, emitting articulate sounds in the form of words; but this we deem doubtful. Vocalisation or singing is a very different affair; this can unquestionably be done by pieces of mechanism much smaller than a pocket watch—as the Swiss Nightingale at the last Great Exhibition testified.

One recorded watch was very big—viz. that which was made for the Irish giant, about eighty years ago; the works were very strong, and the watch with the seal and key weighed nearly a pound. Far more numerous, however, have been the tiny watches, marvellous on account of the quantity of mechanism compressed within small spaces. One of these is about the size and shape of an almond. At the first of our Great Exhibitions, the Swiss exhibited a watch only three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter, inserted in the top of a pencil-case; it showed hours, minutes, seconds, and the day of the month. An English specimen, the size of a threepenny-piece, was a giant to it. The Annual Register, about a century ago, told of a watch only the fifty-fourth part of an inch in diameter; but this, we suspect, must be a mistake for fifty-four hundredths of an inch—a very different affair. Arnold presented to George the Third an exquisite watch of the size of a silver penny, set in a ring; it consisted of a hundred and twenty separate parts, the whole of which weighed together less than six pennyweights. And so intricate were the works, that Arnold had to make tools himself before he could make the watch. The King was so delighted with the work that he sent Arnold five hundred guineas. When the Czar of Russia heard of this, he offered Arnold a thousand guineas to make a similar one for him; but this the artist refused, determined that his own sovereign's watch should be unique.

No marvel that these compact little pieces of mechanism should sometimes have been regarded, soon after their introduction, as the abodes of spirits of good or evil. Persons much nearer home than Tongataboo have so regarded them. Aubrey tells the following tale of an alleged sorcerer in the time of James the First. "One time being at Home Lacy, in Herefordshire, he happened to leave his watch in the chamber window. The maidens came in to make the bed, and hearing a thing in a case cry 'tick, tick, tick,' presently concluded that that was his devill or familiar, and took it by the stringe with the tongs, and threw it out of the windowe

into the moat, to drowne the devill. It so happened that the stringe hung on a sprig of an elder that grew out of the mote, and this confirmed them that 'twas the devill. And so," adds Aubrey, with a tone of satisfaction, "the good old gentleman got his watch again."

Considering the number and smallness of the parts in a watch, the following achievement, as told by Mr. Wood, is remarkable: "From time to time some daring person has climbed the spire (of Salisbury cathedral) to oil the weathercock; a most dangerous feat, as the top of the spire is four hundred and four feet from the ground. It is ascended by ladders for about three-fourths of its height, which are fixed in the spire. A small door then opens, and the adventurer has to climb the rest of his way by a series of irons, something like the handles of flat irons, which are fixed in the stone-work, and by which he is able to make his way to the top to complete his busy work. On one occasion some persons were assembled at the Pheasant, in Salisbury, and were talking about this feat, when a watchmaker, also named Arnold, who was present, offered for a small wager to ascend the spire, to take with him his tools and a watch, to take the watch to pieces on the very top of the spire, to clean it properly, and to bring it down in less than an hour. He accordingly climbed the spire, fixed his back against the stem of the weathercock, completed his task, and descended within the given time."

THREE LEAVES FROM A DIARY.

I.

A CLOUDLESS sky above Nice. The morning breeze has sunk with the sun, now beginning to tinge with gold the sharply defined crags of the Cornice. The air faint with the perfume of orange-flower and violet; jessamine and myrtle; but, above all, the scent of the violet prevails. All is so still that even the feathery olive-leaf scarcely seems to stir. Faintly, very faintly, from below, sound the murmurs of the distant city, mingled with the plashing of the tideless waters. All is peace—all save the human heart. Let us enter this marble palazzo; let us enter reverently, for the Angel of Death is near. On a couch in a darkened room a nation's hope is passing away. Passionate prayers ascend to Heaven for him, fond arms encircle him, but they cannot "stay life's parting wings." The mother's wail over her first-born, the young bride's agonised shriek over her husband, soon tell that all is over. And who is he who rises from his knees, and with blanched lips and trembling hands advances to close the eyes of the dead, and to tenderly kiss the cold lips? One of the mighty ones of the earth, arbiter of the fate of millions, absolute sovereign Czar of all the Russias. Yet he turns, a mere grieving man, to clasp in his arms his dearly loved wife, the bereaved mother of their dead son.

II.

A throng of denizens of many nations are

passing to and fro in the flowery paths of the Belmont gardens, awaiting their turn to take a last look of all that is mortal of the Czarewitch. These gardens are superb, even for Nice, abounding as she does in floral gems. Here, proudly towering over all, stand two gorgeous palm-trees. Hidden under the shade of a weeping-willow, lies a fragrant bed of violets, carpeting the turf with velvety blossoms, while around spreads a perfect wilderness of roses and carnations. Conspicuous among the former, we observe numberless roses of that deep golden hue celebrated in the sparkling sketches of Alphonse Karr. But we are summoned to enter. We ascend a low broad flight of steps, and, crossing a vestibule, pass into a chamber, at the open door of which stand on guard, two sailors belonging to the Russian fleet. The interior of the room is remarkable for its simplicity. On a little camp bed near the centre, lies all that remains of him who but a few short hours ago was the heir to the greatest empire of the earth. The fair young face looks yet more youthful than when in life. In the one hand left outside the white velvet coverlet, is a bunch of lilies; strewn thickly over all are thousands of orange-flowers, blooming and fresh, with the dew still wet on their waxen blossoms. A priest standing on a dais at a short distance off, attired in raiment even more splendid than that worn by the high dignitaries of the Romish Church, reads aloud in the Russian tongue from the Bible. We kneel for a few moments; breathe a prayer for the dead or the living; according to our creeds; and yield place to others.

III.

Floods of summer sunshine (for though it is but early May, in this southern clime the warmth is that of an English July) bathe mountain and valley, rock and sea. We are floating idly on the calm waters of the bay of Villefranche, awaiting the event of the day, the last scene in the sad drama begun in Nice. We are slowly rowing away from the little town or village of Villefranche. Just visible on the right, stand the mimic fortifications of the "Château Smith," an eccentric Englishman's "folly." Towers, battlements, casemates, draw-bridges, portcullis, moats—all manufactured to order; beyond are the grand old works of nature, the purple mountain-chain of the Estrelles, the glowing points of Antibes and St. Tropez, then the Provençal hills again, until their outline melts in the far horizon. On our left is a landscape of bewildering loveliness. Orange and lemon groves, their bright hues softened by the tender greyish green of the olive-trees, clothe the hill-side in undulating waves until they reach the sparkling sea, and dip their branches in it; while high above, towers the Alpine chain and the Tenda, whose summit is still tipped with snow. A little lower, the rugged Turbia, stormed by eternal winds; a little further, the old Roman ruin, the tower of Eza, perched apparently in mid air,

Like an eagle's nest
Hangs on the crest
Of purple Apennine ;

while in the distance gleams the castle-crowned rock of Monaco. In a brief space a religious service is ended. Now, slowly and reverently, a bier is raised and borne on the shoulders of eight sailors of the Vladimir, the Russian steam-frigate which is to convey the mortal remains to their native land. A barge is moored alongside the shore ; an ottoman stands in the centre, covered with ample draperies of white satin, over which are showered masses of white roses, lilies, and orange-blossom. The signal is given, the bier quits the soil of France. Hark ! from castle and fort, from land and sea, from English yacht and Italian frigate, from French and Russian war-ships, simultaneously thunders forth the royal salute ; the last honours are paid to the royal dead by the country where his last hours were passed. Gently, almost noiselessly, the mournful bark floats over the calm waters with its burden. The only sounds that break the stillness of the scene are the distant beatings of the muffled drums, the subdued tones of the Dead March, and the dull sullen booming of the minute-guns. Suddenly peal upon our ears the magnificent strains of the Russian hymn, and a second bark slowly approaches ! All eyes are turned in sorrowful sympathy, all heads are uncovered, as the emperor passes, accompanied by his surviving sons.

We moor our boat to a little jetty in the narrowest part of the harbour, and await the solemn spectacle.

A long line of French and Russian troops, with bands playing the funeral march. Then, detachments of the marine of both nations, each accompanied by appropriate music. A battery of French artillery follow, and close the military part of the procession. The funeral car next comes in sight, drawn by eight white horses, caparisoned with crimson velvet and white plumes : the pall held by the mourners on horseback. They are the Emperor Alexander, the Grand Duke, *now* Czarevitch, with his young brothers Vladimir, Alexis, Sergius, and Paul, and the Prince of Denmark, brother to the betrothed of the early dead. The representatives of the nations and the rulers of the old world and the new follow, and the whole is closed by the Russian and French families resident in Nice. Slowly the long cortège winds its way down the hill, and at length reaches the water's brink. Here, a temporary altar has been erected, canopied by a baldacchino of crimson silk and gold. The bier being deposited on the altar, the priests read the burial service. Follow, the dignitaries of the church, the chiefs of the army, the navy, the representatives of the Emperor Napoleon, of the sovereigns of England, Austria, Denmark, Prussia, Spain, of the United States. The Vladimir receives on board, with her yards manned, the bearers and their charge.

As the bier touches the Russian deck, another thundering salute is fired, and so sails to his last home the ill-fated heir of all the Russias.

OLD STORIES RE-TOLD.

THE GREAT FROST OF 1814.

THAT was a tremendous frost which old chroniclers mention when many of the grim men in mail who were besieging Paris in Edward the Third's time fell from their horses frozen to death. It was reasonably cold in 1402, when the Baltic was frozen firm all the way from Pomerania to Denmark. It was severe in 1544, when all the wine in Flanders had to be sold in blocks. It was pinching sharp in 1594, when the Scheldt bore loaded waggons, and the element of water seemed, by winter's alchemy, transformed to earth. It was a terrible winter when Charles the Tenth, all buff and steel, crossed the Little Belt on the ice, with his cuirassiers, fantassins, artillery, and suttlers' carts, bent on ravaging Denmark with fire and sword.

England, too, has once or twice in nearly every century had her visitations of hard weather. In the reign of James the First, the Thames was frozen, and the men who knew Shakespeare danced round the bonfires and tossed off canary in the drinking-booths. In 1684, the last year of Charles the Second, the frost lasted two months ; forest trees, even oaks, split ; and birds perished in great numbers ; the ice between Southwark and Thames-street was eleven inches thick ; as many as forty coaches plied on the Thames, and the men who had survived the Great Fire and the Plague revelled, drank, and disported to their hearts' content and to the especial enjoyment of worthy gossiping Mr. Pepys. In 1716, George the First's time, our excellent ancestors in cocked-hats enjoyed themselves after their simple-hearted fashion, and roasted oxen whole at a fair on the Thames ; and in 1740 (George the Second) they and their sons had still severer weather, and nine weeks' frost, when the Thames again became a firm highway, and more dances were danced, more oxen were roasted whole, and more handbills were printed in the booths on the ice. In 1789 (in George the Third's reign), the Thames was passable opposite the Custom House for nearly two months ; and in 1795 there was a ten weeks' frost, with only the intermission of one day's thaw.

But the frost of 1814, though lasting nearly sixty days, is perhaps more interesting to us than its predecessors, from the variety of its incidents, the completeness with which they have been recorded, and from its having come into collision with a civilisation so closely resembling our own. Science has not yet discovered to what strange movement southward of the great standing army of polar icebergs we are indebted for these severe seasons, or whether we owe it to conflicts between aerial currents and irregular cycles of telluric influence. The earth moves always at its regulated distance from the

sun, yet now and then comes a winter when the sun seems to have rolled further away from us, and left us to drift northward and freeze up against the pole. That our usual seasons should ever be interrupted by such death-like trances of cold is as difficult to explain as if a healthy man's pulse were every twenty years or so to almost stop for an hour at a time. Science is still short-sighted, and has much to learn. Time will show that these phenomena move also in orbits, and obey fixed laws. When all our old weather sayings have been collected, analysed, codified, and tested by modern experience, we may hope to see some advance made towards more certain knowledge, and a great frost will then perhaps be correctly predicted.

The frost of 1814 began in the usual way. Long spells of cold gusty weather, then a sharper and keener rigour in the air, until, one morning, those who first awoke looked out of door and window and saw the streets and fields shrouded under one vast sheet of snow—treacherously innocent-looking snow. Snow crystallised on every bough and twig; the furrows showed beneath it, only as corpses show under the pall. There was a glare from it that lightened the air. It muffled all sounds. Death stepped silently over it to claim the shepherd dying on the moor, and the pedlar lost in the drift, the benighted beggar-man, and the tired traveller. Like shadows, starvation and famine followed their grizzly king.

A great frost begins half in mischief, by hindering work, stopping traffic, and blocking up coaches; but it ends with deaths in snow and in the flood, perils, dangers, and disasters. An old French marquis (let us say Talleyrand, grandfather of the family of anecdotes) was once asked to describe the pangs of rheumatism as compared with those of gout. "Ma foi," said the old gentleman, with an ineffable shrug, "you know the rack? eh bien. Suppose yourself on it; the pulleys work, the windlass moves, the cords on your wrists and ankles tighten. They screw you as far as you can go—all this you can bear, and still live—et bien, that is the *rheumatism*. Now encore the rack. They give you one screw more—et bien, zat is ze gout." So it is with continuous cold. The roads harden, the rivers glaze, the earth becomes iron, the sky steel; the old and the sick, the luxurious and the delicate, almost think that they can bear no more. Then comes another fortnight's frost, and gives them one screw still. They live, but (those who survive) how they suffer! for England is not prepared to brave suddenly, without appliances and without preparations, the cold of Iceland.

The great frost of 1814 began with trifling incidents—talked of for the moment, and then forgotten before the second fall of snow came. The horse of a postboy on his way to Sydenham from the twopenny post-office in Gerrard-street, Soho, slipped on some ice on Dulwich-common. The nag, frightened by the report of a gun, darted into the fog, and was seen no more until the following morning, when it

calmly trotted up to the door of the Sydenham post-office, soon after daybreak, with the saddle-bags on his back just as they had been placed there in London. Before the public had well digested that accident, it was informed that a pig had been seen gravely floating down the Thames, between the bridges, on a large slab of ice. After repeated squeaks for a pilot, a waterman became the porcine friend in need, who gallantly rescued that navigator, and took him home with all the cordiality possible. On the 17th of January the frost became more stringent, and the news more alarming. One hundred bags of letters had failed to arrive, owing to the blockade of the roads. The mail-coaches from Glasgow, Portpatrick, and Edinburgh, had not reached Carlisle. Three days' mails were due from below Exeter and from Holyhead.

In the mean time, the snowfall in Ireland had been heavy beyond all precedent for fifty years. It was slight the first day; but by the next night the roads were so blocked that only the Galway mail arrived in Dublin; and even the mounted postboys were unable to leave the city. For nearly twenty days, all communication with the interior was cut off. At last, a severe frost frittered away the snow, and, to the delight of all Dublin, one morning several mail-boys rode into that city. In the narrow streets the snow was six feet deep. In Fleet-street a lady was suffocated in a heap of snow close to her own door.

"The distress in that abode of poverty, the Liberty," says an Irish paper, "is excessive. In many streets and lanes the wretched inhabitants are literally blocked up in their houses, and in the attempt to go abroad experience every misery that it is possible to imagine. It is painful to state that the number of deaths there have, within the last few days, been greater than at any other period, unless in the time of the plague. We are informed that eighty funerals occurred last Sunday. This unusual mortality is chiefly to be attributed to the excessive fogs that have prevailed; while, although not more severe than what commonly appear in England, were heavier than any known in Ireland for many years. The fog was entirely confined to Dublin, the country around being completely free." Many families of children were left orphans. The coffin-makers in Cork-street could not make shells fast enough, so that the poor lay unburied for many days before they could be removed to the hospital-field, where the snow lay in some places twenty feet deep over ground that the pick and shovel would hardly excavate. Outbuildings and stables were crushed by weight of snow, and roofs forced in. Some persons were killed by these accidents. On the last day of December, a temporary wooden building, containing Knox's Panorama of Dublin, fell in and buried the picture, which could not be recovered till the thaw released it from the avalanche of snow. For two days in December, the shops in many streets were closed, as no customers could approach them. On January 2, however, the city was gladdened by

the sight of droves of cattle from the country, and the market once more resounded with bellowing oxen and bleating sheep. Food before this had been at famine prices, as the canals had all been closed, and the peat and potato boats prevented from entering Dublin. The alarm and distress were universal, and a rapid thaw was dreaded like the approach of death.

In England the deaths grew more numerous. A paper of January 21 mentions a grazier, of Coltsworth, being found frozen to death between Langford and Upham. He had been thrown from his horse on his way to Marlow, and died of cold before he could recover his fall. The poor fellow had a purse with sixty pounds in his pocket.

The thermometer on the 9th of January stood at seven degrees Fahrenheit, and at Petersham only two degrees. This was the severest cold known in England since 1798, when a glass at Sir George Schuckbury's, in Park-street, was two degrees below zero; at Clapham seven degrees below zero; and at Maidstone eleven or twelve degrees below zero—the lowest ever recorded in this country. At this time people drew all their water from the main-pipes, which, running over, turned the streets into sheets of ice. Parties of men with barrows and shovels patrolled the streets to clear the snow from the roofs, which had become universally leaky. On the 21st, a gentleman drove a pair of bays in a sledge curriole through the City. This was the bright side of the snow; the dark side was shown in the countless labourers thrown out of work, and the extravagant price of coals, meat, and bread. The newspapers, always generously ready to help charity, suggested parochial meetings to collect funds for the poor. The parishes of St. Giles, Cripplegate, had before this nobly given away one thousand bushels of coal.

On the 22nd the London people began to get more anxious about the mails. At this crisis the delays became most unprecedented and alarming. The Edinburgh and Glasgow letters, brought from Barnet in a post-chaise, were six hours passing over eleven miles of road, the guards and attendants having repeatedly to get out and drag the horses out of the drifts. The snow—everywhere three feet deep—was at Finchley, at the side of the road, twenty feet deep. The Aylesbury mails had to be brought on, alternately by carriages, on horseback, and on men's shoulders. The Leeds coach was abandoned on the road, and the mails dragged forty miles across country before any vehicle could be procured. On one day, thirty-three mails, with four hundred letter-bags, failed to arrive at St. Martin's-le-Grand, though the guards had fought with the snow like heroes. The Kent and Essex roads were the only ones passable beyond a few miles from London. The western coaches came to a stop in various places. The Windsor coach was lugged through sixteen feet of snow at Colnbrook by fifty labourers, and then, panic-stricken, stuck fast. In Maidenhead-lane, the

snow had doubled its first depth, and between Twyford and Reading it had drifted into mountains. As to Bagshot-heath, the coachmen refused to attempt its Alpine terrors. Nothing moved on the north road after the Newcastle coach got off the track and fell into a pit eight feet deep—without, however, hurting anybody.

Trembling boots and shuddering ostlers reported that the Exeter and Cheshire mails were lost, every one frozen to death; and there was a flying legend that the Portsmouth Highflyer had jolted down the Devil's Punchbowl. The middle north road was choked near Highgate-hill. At Ivy Bridge, in Devonshire, the snow was fourteen feet deep, and all through the country men were cutting paths and roads.

It was now seriously proposed, as there was no place in London to which the street snow could be carted, to have stoves and boilers in every street in which to melt it. On the 25th of January, the local government in Brighton was loudly praised for its zeal in removing snow and spreading fine gravel on the footpaths; all persons not clearing the pavement before their houses were rigidly fined. Only three of the eight coaches leaving London at nine at night and reaching Brighton at six in the morning arrived in Brighton on the Thursday of this week: the rest were all blockaded at Reigate.

While Lord Ranelagh was astonishing London by dexterous driving in a Lapland sledge, Liverpool was bewailing cold fifteen and even seventeen degrees below freezing point. The markets were not supplied, and the navigation of the Mersey had become difficult and hazardous. At Stamford, the snow was so deep that on the 21st three up coaches—the Highflyer, the Paul Jones, and the Mirror—had to be dug out of the snow. The Glasgow mail was stopped at Baldock, and the Edinburgh at Royston Hills. The roads to Oakham and Uppingham were impassable. At the same date all communication was cut off between Canterbury, the southern coast, and London. The "heavy coaches" from town were stopped at Rochester: Chatham-hill being blocked. The Ayr coach stuck in a wraith near Kilmarnock, and was left there stranded. The rider with the bags from Ayr to Girvan, having had to get his horse dug out of the morass of snow, went on on foot. At Plymouth, twenty inches of snow fell in six hours. The western road was impassable even to horsemen. At Exeter, for one day, the shops were all shut, the very windows being filled up with snow.

All over England the roads were effaced and hardly any landmarks left. Everywhere upon the plain of snow lay moored waggons, carts, and coaches deserted by their masters until the thaw came. On the borders of Warwickshire and Northamptonshire, the snow was of a vast depth. At Dunchurch, the drifts rose to a height of twenty-four feet. The majestic current of the river Trent was frozen for the first time for twenty years, the ice lying

in great ribbed flakes. Near Turriff, on the 16th, the cold reached twenty-eight degrees below freezing point. All communication between Huntingdon and Buntingford ceased about this time, the snow near Godmanchester being ordinarily ten feet deep. The mails to Scotland ceased for several days, to the general inconvenience and alarm. At last, one Sunday, a mail, entirely filled and piled with letters, appeared, dragged by ten horses. The road from Puckeridge to Accrington was cleared by a snow plough of the Earl of Hardwicke's. A paper of this date says:

"Nothing can exceed the exertions of the Post Office in having the roads cleared in all directions, for the conveyance of the mails to and from the capital. Numerous gangs of labourers have been employed on all the great roads to remove the depths of snow, so that a general communication with the capital may be hourly looked for, if there be no further fall. Several accounts have reached us of melancholy accidents that have occurred on account of the severity of the weather. It is apprehended that the loss to farmers of their live stock will be severely felt. A gentleman of Chard has lost above a hundred sheep. Men are employed night and day in digging those animals out of the accumulated heaps under which they are buried."

One day during this cruel weather, a dismounted dragoon on duty on the North Terrace, at Windsor, heard the cries of a person in distress in the fields beyond Eton. On being relieved, he and a comrade went in search of the man, and by dint of making a sort of movable bridge of their cloaks and some hurdles they eventually found a man and his horse who had been sunk in a roadside drift for hours.

A newspaper paragraph of about the end of January is eloquent as to the distress of London. It states that in Lambeth, in two days, one thousand two hundred and sixty-five poor families, comprising four thousand one hundred and seventy-six persons, had been relieved. The period was full of contrasts. While the Earl of Eglington was giving merry curling matches near his castle, Yorkshire mail-coach guards were plunging into the snow with all the dogged courage with which soldiers mount a breach; while London dandies were driving sledges, poor Scotch packmen and Highland shepherds were perishing in the treacherous wraiths.

Lord Sidmouth, getting alarmed at the snow deluge, issued instructions, on the 28th, to the lord mayor, and the lord-lieutenants of counties, to call local meetings of magistrates and employ men to clear the roads. But the great doubt was, whether the circular would ever reach the counties.

Towards the end of this month, the accounts from Dublin grew even more alarming. The stoppage of the food supplies had caused all but a famine. When a man has only potatoes to eat, he has not the stamina wherewith to fast

long. Men, women, children, and horses, were frequently seen to drop dead in the streets. The deaths had increased to eighty a day, and diseases began to break out.

On the 27th, a poor charwoman was found frozen to death in the Highgate road; on the same day, the son of a Westminster tradesman, named Williams, getting on the ice near the shore at Millbank, was carried down the river on a piece that broke off. Many persons saw him and heard him cry for aid; but they could give no help, and he fell off and sank nearly opposite the Penitentiary.

January 29th brought a sudden change; winter, momentarily weary of its tyranny, relaxed its grasp. There came a heavy fall of snow, which suddenly turned to heavy rain, and was the signal for universal floods and inundations. The York and Boston mails were for several hours soaking in Caxton waters, near Huntingdon. Edmonton wash was out, and the road impassable. Seizing its chance, out launched the Exeter coach that had been detained in London several days, and got safely through.

The Frogmore houses were inundated, and at Eton the people removed the furniture from their lower rooms. Then all at once came a stormy south-west wind, and a severe frost slipped its white manacles again upon the rivers. The great roads sheeted with ice. There were even more impassable than when filled up with several feet of snow. The outcry at the state of the London streets increased in loudness and violence. The local authorities, of course, utterly broke down, as they usually do in all exceptional emergencies. In some places the snow lay in huge frozen hillocks that upset carts; one even upset a mail-coach at the top of the Haymarket, and a gig was overturned by another in Cheapside. It was said that the scavengers would not remove the snow until it was rendered saleable by being impregnated with mud and dung.

The papers of this period are full of curious facts relating to the great frost; not merely natural phenomenon, but incidents showing how much the routine of social events was being disturbed. Persons who had to pay money into Chancery pleaded for a respite owing to their money-letters being delayed by the non-arrival of the mails. Another day it is reported that Mr. Bellamy had given the poor of St. Margaret's several chaldrons of coals from the cellars of the House of Commons, to be replaced in the summer when coals would be at the cheapest. The same day we are told that a quantity of "golden maids," a peculiar sort of fish, had been picked up on Brighton beach and sold at high prices. These fish were blinded by the snow (how, we are not called upon to explain): they are always found in great numbers after heavy falls of snow. Wild swans from Norway had been seen at Boston. Cumberland postmen were reported to have been lost in the drift. Sheep at Stock, in Essex, were found alive "and in good spirits" after a twelve days' burial in the snow. Deer were

discovered dead and buried in the snow at Hampton Court Park; at Bushey, pigs perished in their sties, and bullocks were with difficulty rescued in the fields. The hares from Hampton Court crossed the Thames and took refuge in the grounds of Lord Fitzgerald. Among other curious accidents during this frost we may mention the fact of the horse of a soldier of the Eighteenth Dragoons slipping and throwing his rider near Hilsea. The man's sword, slipping from its scabbard, pierced the head of the trooper and inflicted a mortal wound. The only death on the ice mentioned during this time is that of a toymaker of Millbank, who was drowned while skating on the canal in St. James's Park. Four other persons were rescued by means of ropes and drags.

By the end of January the silent power of the frost had gradually closed in upon the great river that brings the wealth of the world to London. That great artery of the commerce of the four quarters of the globe had ceased to ebb and flow. The systole and diastole of England's heart had for a time stopped. The wonder and delight of the Londoners was unbounded. The fact was at once utilised for pleasure and business. The great frost fair of the old times was revived at Queenhithe and Chiswick, and once more between the bridges meat was cooked and verses were printed. The cold was a good social excuse for the glass, and those who used it made good use of the excuse. The coloured flags of all nations fluttered in the cold air from the roofs of countless booths, where a licence reigned forbidden on shore. The papers described it vividly enough:

"Bands of pandean minstrels, relieved by the dulcet strains of the tin trumpet on all sides, delighted the ear. In the centre of the river a narrow stream defied the power of the frozen region, and marked the path 'where once the current ran.' This interruption, however, so far from impeding the gambols of the day, increased the sport, and added to the profit of the stewards of the scene. A few small planks in some cases, and an old boat or two in others, with the simple addition of Charon's fare, kept the communication entire, and enlivened the pastime. In some parts of the stream, where the width of unfrozen water admitted it, boats completely bent for sail, with their full equipment, attracted the heedless throng. In these were placed food for the hungry, and for the thirsty relief; gin and gingerbread, with other cordials, were here on sale at a moderate price. 'Ubi mel, ibi apes.' The crowd poured towards this magnetic point with extraordinary avidity. Men, women, and children were often seen in one promiscuous heap, although it was impossible not to feel anxious to afford every opportunity of cheering by playful pastime the nipping severity of the weather; yet we cannot disengage our mind from the hazardous consequences of such an exhibition as we are now noticing. Between the bridges the river is now entirely covered, not with a regular even frozen surface, but with an incongruous accumulation

of icy fragments and congealed piled snow, which, during the partial thaw, was disengaged up the river and floated downwards; this having been interrupted by the intervention of the bridges, and partially re-united by the frost of the last two or three days, has completely covered the surface of the water. It is yet extremely dangerous, and was in many places last night set in motion by the influx of the tide, and carried with extreme velocity against the piers of the bridges. Some waterman, more foolhardy than others, ventured to cross opposite Temple-gardens, and nearly lost his life in the attempt." While the crowd danced and blew trumpets, sprang rattles, drank gin, and ate gingerbread, scientific men disputed whether the ice rose and fell in one solid mass with the ebb and flow, or whether it remained steady at the greatest flood height and bore its own weight in suspension during the ebb. In the mean time, dandies from Bond-street and the Row, sporting men from Tattersall's, soldiers from Knightsbridge, graziers from Smithfield, and ladies from everywhere, crowded the noisy shows on the ice bridge opposite Queenhithe, where the centre of the fair was. It was one long carnival, and everybody went to see it.

At last the thaw came. The rain fell, and the wind blew, and the river broke from its prison, eager to see again its mighty and innumerable ships and its brave lovers, the seamen. Poor people waking that night (February 7) heard the rain pelt at the windows, and the wind shout down the chimney-pots, and thanked God that the hard time of dear bread and no work was over. The great snow-drifts melted at the stern call of the south-west wind, and the great shroud was drawn back from the face of nature, waking from her long death-like trance. This change also, Death followed silently. Many perished in the floods in Lincolnshire. Even the frost fair had nearly been fatal to a few of its lingering frequenters. Nine men were left on the ice in a booth, to guard it for the proprietor, Mr. Lawrence, of the Feathers public-house, Timber-street, Queenhithe. He left it safe at nine, not fearing the thaw, and took with him all the spirits and other liquors, except a pint of gin, which he gave the men to drink. At two in the morning the sleeping custodians were awakened by a movement in the ice, which was breaking up and dashing against the bridges. They ran out and found themselves, in the darkness, sweeping, with the speed of the rapids, towards Blackfriars-bridge, against which their ice-raft was about to dash. While they were staring, horror-stricken, their fire caught the booth and it broke into a flame. The men with great difficulty leaped into a lighter which, broken from its moorings, was drifting past; the next moment, that too crashed against the bridge and went to pieces. Again the men threw themselves into the water, clung to the bridge, and saved their lives just as they were at the last point of exhaustion.

The Isle of Ely was almost entirely under

water, as late as the 23rd of February. Trees and houses were alone visible, emerging as from a vast sea. Cattle were drowned, and haystacks floated off. All the low lands west of Lincoln, and those towards Gainsborough, were submerged for several thousand acres. The fierce and swollen current swept down a new bridge at Boultham, the river Witham breaking its banks. The river at Wisbeach rising eight feet, it required tremendous efforts to save the bridge from the packs of floating ice. For two days, gangs of men and an ice-boat with eighteen horses were incessantly at work. The old wooden bridge over the Trent at Markham, near Newark, a well-known nuisance on the great north road, gave way, just after the heavily laden Worksop and Manchester waggon had passed over it.

By degrees the inundations subsided and the snow melted, showing once more the black earth and the keen green blades of young corn. Even the great mountains of ice and congealed snow that had been carted into Moorfields, and had given it the passing name of "New Iceland," melted too; and so, with its bursts of pleasure and its many tragedies of sorrow, passed away the great frost of 1814.

MOVING (DIORAMIC) EXPERIENCES.

THE diorama is a demesne that seems to be strictly preserved for the virtuous and good. Those for whom the gaudy sensualities of the theatre are interdicted may here be entertained with the mild and harmless joys of an instructive diorama. At the doors going in, we may see the quality of the guests—benevolent-looking elderly men, dry virgins, a clergyman or two, and portly mammas with a good deal on their minds, who have brought the governess and all their young family. There is a crowd, and extraordinary eagerness to get in, though there, alas! often proves to be too much room. For these moral shows address themselves only to a limited area; though the limited area does not come forward so handsomely as it should do. Among such audiences there is a more resentful and jealous feeling about points of disagreement between them to the entertainment, such as not commencing—returning money and the like; the umbrellas and sticks, it may be remarked, are made more use of—I mean in the way of creating noise—and the word "Shame!" is uttered from the back benches with more burning indignation. How often on the first night, say, of the Grand Moving Diorama of the Tonga Islands, when there has been a long delay, and something fatally wrong in the gasworks of the little town has prevented the despairing exhibitor from doing much more than show dim pictures, and transformations that miscarried dreadfully, how often have we not seen a bald head and glassy spectacles rise out of the Cimmerian gloom to which the character of the show inevitably consigns its audiences, and in what seems sepulchral accents address

us on our wrongs. We learn by our excellent weekly organ—not the one we hear in our place of worship—that this is Mr. Laycock, our "worthy" fellow-citizen, who has been for years a resident. He thinks we have been treated badly—outrageously; in fact, in the whole course of his long residence at Dunmacleary—then umbrellas and sticks give a round—he never recollected an audience—a highly intelligent and respectable audience (sticks and umbrellas again)—treated with such disrespect. What they had seen that night was a *miserable* and inefficient thing—a wretched imposture and *take-in*" (sticks again). The poor showman is always helpless, and from his "stand," where he had been in such luxuriant language describing the beauties of foreign lands, excitedly defends himself, to cries of "No, no," and umbrella interruptions. It was not his fault. He had arrived late "in their town." He had been up all night ("Return the money"). It was the fault of their gasworks (groans), and he would mention names. Yes, of Mr. John Cokeleigh, the secretary ("Shame"), who assured him (great interruption at this unworthy attempt to defame the absent).

A really good diorama is a really high treat, and for the young an entertainment second only to the pantomime. Parents should encourage this feeling, instead of serving out those little sugar-plums, which are so precious to a child, as if they were dangerous and forbidden fruit, which might corrupt the morals and corrupt the soul. These joys are always made to hang awfully in the balance—on the turn of a feather-weight, as it were—by well-meaning but injudicious parents.

Alas! do I not recall Mr. Blackstone, our daily tutor, a steady, conscientious, poor, intellectual "navvy," who was reading nominally "for orders," but, as it proved, for a miserable curacy, which he still holds, and I believe *will* hold, till he reaches sixty. This excellent man kept a mother and sisters "on me and a few more boys," that is to say, by coming for two hours each day on tutorship. Mr. Blackstone kept a little judgment-book with surprising neatness, in which are entries which scored down, with awful rigidity, Latin, bene; Greek, satis; French, medi. This volume was submitted every evening at dinner to the proper authority, and by its testimony we were used according to our deserts, and, it may be added, with the result which the rare instinct of the Lord Hamlet anticipated on using people after their deserts. During this course of instruction, it came to pass that the famous Diorama of the North Pole arrived in our city. It had indeed been looked for very wistfully and for a long time, and its name and description displayed on walls in blue and white stalactite letters, apparently hanging from the eaves of houses, stimulated curiosity. Indeed, I had the happiness of seeing the North Pole actually *arrive*, not as it might be present to romantic eyes, all illuminated from behind, and in a state

of transparent gorgeousness, but in a studied privacy and all packed close in great rolls. Later, I found my way up the deserted stair of the "rooms" where the North Pole had taken up its residence, and, awe-struck, peeped into the great darkened chamber where it reposed with mysterious stillness. There was a delightful perfume of gas, and the rows of seats stretched away far back, all deserted. The North Pole, shrouded in green baize, rose up gauntly, as if it were wrapping itself close in a cloak, and did not wish to be seen. A hammer began to knock behind, and I withdrew hurriedly. Somehow, that grand *déshabille* by day left almost as mysterious, though not so gay, an impression as the night view. But to return to Mr. Blackstone. Latterly, rather an awkward run of "satis" and "medis" had set in, and the pupil at that evening's inspection of the books had been warned and remonstrated. With that rather gloomy view which is always taken of a child's failings, he had been warned that he was entering on a course that would bring him early "to a bad end," if not "to the gallows." This awful warning, though the connexion of this dreadful exit with the "satis," &c., was but imperfectly seen, always sank deep, and the terrors of the "drop" and a public execution sometimes disturbed youthful dreams. But, however, just on the arrival of the North Pole it was unfortunate that this tendency towards a disgraceful end should have set in. For the very presence of this pleasing distraction unnerved the student. It was determined that an early day should be fixed when the family should go, as it were, en masse, and have their minds improved by the spectacle of what the Arctic navigators had done. To the idle apprentice who was under Mr. Blackstone's care, it was sternly intimated that unless he promptly mended, and took the other path which did *not* lead to the gallows, he should be made an example of. This awful penalty was enough from sheer nervousness to bring about failure, and when the day fixed for the North Pole came round, Mr. Blackstone said "it was with much pain that he was compelled to give the worst mark in his power for Greek, namely, 'malè!'"

At this terrible blow all fortitude gave way, and, with a piteous appeal to tutorial mercy, it was "blubbered" out what a stake was depending on his decision, and that not only was the North Pole hopelessly lost for ever, but *that worse might follow*. Blackstone was a good soul at heart, and I recal his walking up and down the room in sincere distress as he listened to the sad story. He was a conscientious man, and when he began, "You see what you are coming to, by the course of *systematic* idleness you have entered on," and when, too, he began to give warnings of the danger of such a course, with an indistinct allusion to the gallows, it was plain there was hope. After a good deal of sarcasm and anger, and even abuse, I recal his sitting down with his penknife and neatly—he did everything neatly

—scratching out the dreadful "malè." But his conscience would only suffer him to substitute a "vix medi," a description which, in truth, did not differ much, but which had not the naked horror of the other. I could have embraced his knees. And yet suspicion was excited by this erasure, most unjustly, and but little faith was put in the protestations of the accused; for his eagerness to be present at the show was known, and he was only cleared by the friendly testimony of an expert as to handwriting.

That North Pole was very delightful. It seems to me now to be mostly ships in various positions, and very "spiky" icebergs. The daring navigators, Captain Back and others, always appeared in full uniform. They had all our sympathy. The most exciting scene was the capture of the whale, as it was called, though it scarcely amounted to a capture. When the funny monster had struck out with his tail and sent the boat and crew all into the air, a dreadful spectacle of terror and confusion, which caused a sensation among the audience, exhibited by rustling and motion in the dark, an unpleasantness, however, quickly removed by the humour of our lecturer, who, in his comic way, says, "As this is a process which happens on an average about once in the week, the sailors get quite accustomed to this ducking, and consider it rather fun than otherwise, as it saves them the trouble of *taking a bath*." This drollery convulses us, and the youthful mind thinks what it would give to have such wit. Not less delightful was the scene where the seals were playing together on the vast and snowy-white shore, with the great "hicebergs" (so our lecturer had a tendency to phrase it) in the distance, and the two ships all frozen up. We had music all through, as the canvas moved on. And when our lecturer dwelt on the maternal affection of the wounded seal which was struggling to save its offspring, and declined to escape into the water, Mr. George Harker, the admired tenor (but invisible behind the green baize), gave us, with great feeling and effect—was it the ballad of "Let me kiss him for his Mother"?

Only a few years ago, when the intrepid navigators, M'Clintock and others, were exciting public attention, a new panorama of their perils and wanderings was brought out. Faithful to the old loves of childhood, I repaired to the show; but presently begun to rub my eyes. It seemed like an old dream coming back. The boat in the air, the wounded seal, and the navigators themselves, in full uniform, treating with the Esquimaux—all this was familiar. But I rather resented the pointing out of the chief navigator "in the foreground" as the intrepid Sir Leopold, for he was the very one who had been pointed to as the intrepid Captain Back.

Not less welcome in these old days was the ingenious representation of Mr. Green the intrepid aéronaut's voyage in his great balloon "Nas sau." There was a dramatic air about all *that*. The view of gardens, crowded with spectators

in very bright dresses (illuminated from behind), and with faces all expressive of delight and wonder, and the balloon in the middle—a practicable balloon, *not* attached to the canvas. We could see it swaying as the men strove to hold it. I remember the describer's words to this hour: "At last, all being now ready, Mr. Green, the intrepid aeronaut, and his companion entered the car, and having taken farewell of his friends, gave the signal to cast off, and in a moment the balloon rapidly ascended." At the same time cheerful music behind the baize, "The Roast Beef of Old England," I think, struck up, and the garden, wondering spectators, trees, all went *down* rapidly, the balloon remaining stationary. The effect was most ingeniously produced. I never shall forget the interest with which that voyage was followed. We had the clouds, the stars, the darkened welkin, all moving slowly by (to music). The crossing of the Channel by night, and the rising of the sun—wonderful effect! Plenty of rich fiery streaking well laid on. Then the Continent, and terra firma again; and how ingeniously was a difficulty got rid of. Necessarily, the countries we were to see from Mr. Green's car could only be under faint bird's-eye condition, and "so many thousand feet above the level of the sea," which would make everything rather indistinct and unsatisfactory. We therefore took advantage of the interval between the first and second parts to get rid of our large balloon which blocked up the centre of the canvas, and changed it for a tiny one, which was put away high in the air, in its proper place, where it took up no room, and did quite as well as the other. However, at the close of the performance, when we had travelled over everything, and wished to see Mr. Green coming down, we took back our large balloon, and were very glad to see it again, and the wondering faces of the Germans.

There is one scene which the dioramic world seems inclined not willingly to let die. At least it somehow thrusts itself without any regard to decent dioramic fitness upon every kind of diorama indiscriminately. Any student will know at once that I allude to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. This seems to have a sort of fascination for the painters. I never knew a single show that had not this church "lugged in" head and shoulders, or rather porch and pillars, either at the beginning or at the end. I am afraid this is from no spirit of piety or veneration, but simply from the favourable opening the church presents for changing from a daylight view to a gorgeous "night effect." They know, too, that the good are among the audience in strong force, and that is touching the true chord. We know by heart the clumpy Byzantine pillars and the Moorish arches, and the stairs down to the right, and the round globes of white light lamps burning, and the men in turbans kneeling.

Suddenly we hear the harmonium behind, and

the voices of Mr. George Harker, the admired tenor, and Miss Edith Williams, the (also) admired soprano, attuning their admired voices together in a very slow hymn; and gradually the whole changes to midnight, with a crypt lit up with countless lamps and countless worshippers. A dazing and dazzling spectacle, the umbrellas of the good and pious becoming deafening in their approbation. Taken as an old friend, that I have seen in every town in the kingdom, I have an affection for this crypt and its transformation; but still I know every stone in it by heart. Where was it that I saw the DIORAMA OF IRELAND, with "national harps and altars," "national songs and watchwords," "national dances and measures," all in great green letters, made out of staggering round towers and ruined abbeys?—appropriate songs and dances by Miss Biddy Magrath. Where but in an Irish town rather towards the north. I recal the lecturer, a very solemn man, who preached a good deal as the canvas moved on to music—it is a law that canvas *can* only move to music; and a city with bridges, &c., and a river would slowly pass on, and stop short when it was finally developed. Our lecturer would say, sadly, as if he were breaking a death, "LIM-ER-ICK! the city of the vier-lated te-reaty!" The result of this announcement in the northern town was a burst of hisses, with a counter-demonstration from the back benches. The grand scene, however, was when a bright and gay town came on, and was introduced as "DERRY, THE MAIDEN CITY!" Then there was terrific applause, and even cheers, with a counter-demonstration from the back. It will be conceived that this state of things did not conduce at all to the success of the diorama, and it was very shortly withdrawn from its native land, and exhibited to more indifferent spectators. And yet Miss Magrath's exertions, both in singing and dancing, were exceedingly arch, and deserved a better fate.

The lecturers are always delightful. What were they—I always think while waiting for the green baize to be drawn—*before* they took to this profession? Is it a lucrative profession?—by the way, it certainly must be a limited one. How he must get at last absolutely to loathe the thing he described, and yet he always looks at it as he speaks with an air of affection; but in his heart of hearts he *must* loathe it, or be dead to all human feelings and repugnances. For only consider the "day performance" at two—the night one at eight. Yet he always seems to deliver it with an air of novelty, and an air of wisdom, too, and morality, which is not of the pulpit or forum, but simply dioramic. It is only when he descends to jests and joking that he loses our respect. A little story of his goes an immense way, especially anything touching on love or courtship. "There," he says, speaking of the prairies, "the vast rolling plains are covered with a rank lugsurious and rich verjor. There we can see the solitary wigwam, with

the squaw preparing the family kettle, unencumbered by their babies. They have an excellent way in the prairies of dealing with troublesome appendages. Every child is made up into a sort of case or bandage, as depicted in the foreground of the scene. When they are busy, they simply hang them on a tree to be out of the way." Every father and mother laughs heartily, and with delight, at this humorous stroke. Perhaps the pleasantest of the whole round was a certain diorama that called itself "The Grand Tour," and which carried out the little fiction of its visitors being "excursionists," and taken over every leading city on the Continent. We were supposed to take our tickets, "first-class," at London-bridge, embarked in a practicable steamer at St. Katharine's Wharf, with its rigging all neatly cut out, so that, as we began to move—or rather, as the many thousand square feet of canvas began to move—we saw the Tower of London, and various objects of interest along the river passing us by. The steamer was uncommonly good indeed, and actually gave delicate people present quite an uncomfortable feeling. Presently all the objects of interest had gone by, and we were out at sea, with fine effects by moonlight, fine effects by blood-red sunrise, and then we were landed, and saw every city that was worth visiting. Against one little "effect" some of our "excursionists"—among the more elderly—made indignant protest. When we were passing through Switzerland and came to Chamounix, where there had been a prodigal expenditure of white paint and a great saving in other colours, and found ourselves at the foot of the great mountain—I forget how many thousand feet above the level of the sea, but we were told to a fraction—our lecturer warmed into enthusiasm, and burst out into the lines:

Mont Blanc, the monarch of mountains,
In his robe of snow, &c.

But the greatest danger that menaces us is what our lecturer calls the "have-a-launch," which must be a very serious thing indeed. "Often 'ole villages may be reposing in peaceful tranquillity, the inhabitants fast locked in slumber, when suddenly, without a note of preparation"—Exactly, that is what such of us as have nerves object to—a startling crash produced behind the baize—a scream among the audience—and the smiling village before us is buried in a mass of snow—white paint. It is the "have-a-launch." This is the grand coup of the whole. Why does the music take the shape of the mournful Dead March in Saul?

Yet even dioramas have the elements of decay. Sometimes they light on a dull and indifferent town, and get involved in debt and difficulty. The excursions can't pay their own expenses. I once saw a diorama of the Susquehanna, covering many thousand square feet of canvas, and showing the whole progress of that noble river, sold actually for no more than five pounds. I

was strongly tempted, as the biddings rested at that figure. It would be something to say *you had* bought a panorama once in your life.

A POST-OFFICE CASE.

I SUPPOSE that those well-meaning, weak-minded people who are just now reviving the old exploded nonsense about the wickedness of any duty being performed on Sunday in the Post-office would have been horrified indeed if they could have looked into a certain room in St. Martin's-le-Grand about two o'clock on a Sunday afternoon in May, 1865. For there was duty being performed there at that time, and no mistake, and some of the first men in the service were engaged in its performance. I'm not speaking of myself when I say this, though I was there amongst others. I had been to church, and was holding my little girl by the hand and answering her, to the best of my power, one of those odd sorts of questions that children will ask about the sermon and the service, when, as we turned the corner of the road (I live in a suburban district), I saw a Hansom cab, with the horse very hot and very blown, standing at my garden gate, and I turned to my wife, who was following close behind with my eldest boy, and said to her, "Off again!" I had only arrived at home on Friday night from a trial at Lancaster, where I had had the pleasure of convicting one of the greatest scoundrels that ever disgraced our service, and I should not have minded a little rest, but the Hansom cab gave me the first hint of being wanted, and when the door was opened, and I saw one of the detectives whom we retain in our employ sitting in my little hall, I knew my fate. "Wanted, Scotcher?" said I to the detective. "Wanted immediate, sir?" said Scotcher, "and it's a buster this time, and no mistake." So I had my portmanteau, which I always keep ready packed, put into the cab, and I said good-bye to the wife, and drove off with Scotcher in the Hansom to St. Martin's. You know that building, I know, sir, but you've only seen it when it has been thronged with hundreds of people all intent on getting through an immensity of work in a limited time. You've no conception what it is when empty, how your footfall reverberates through the long passages and the vast halls and the big rooms, and how the very fact of your knowing how lively it can be renders the dullness and the silence oppressive and intolerable. Scotcher and I, admitted by a private pass key, clanked through the long passages until we reached the private room of the Head of the Missing Letter Branch, where he, one of the secretaries, and two or three of the inferior officers, were assembled in conclave, and then I learned what had taken place.

It appears that after business hours on the previous day (business closes at one o'clock on Saturdays), the officer who is left in charge of the building to transact any pressing business that may arise, and who is officially styled the "clerk

in waiting," received the following telegram from the postmaster of Waterbridge: "A number of money-order advices of large amount passed through the office last night, from Higher Brickey. From communication just received from the sub-postmaster, it does not appear that any such were issued by him. I fear something wrong has taken place. They were all addressed to branch offices in London. One is believed to be the Minories, and one in Peckham district." Acting upon the very vague information received in this telegram, the clerk in waiting ascertained in the course of Saturday that Higher Brickey money orders to the extent of one hundred pounds had been cashed in the course of the morning at the money-order offices in the Minories and at the Eastern District offices. No further information could be obtained that evening. Before the following morning (Sunday) the following telegram was received from Waterbridge: "Send to the secretary immediately. Five hundred money orders and advices were taken from the sub-postmaster of Higher Brickey, on Friday, by a man calling himself an inspector of the Post-office. At least fifty were used on that day, and will involve a loss of one thousand pounds, as the advices all appeared to be made out for ten pounds each. Caution should at once be sent to all the money-order offices in the London district. The remitter's name appeared to be Grieve."

This was startling intelligence indeed, and on the receipt of it, the clerk in waiting at once sent off for the assistant-secretary and the head of the missing-letter branch, and despatched Sergeant Scotcher for me. When we were all assembled we had a hurried consultation, woke up a semi-vinous, semi-somnolent printer who had a small hand-machine in a neighbouring court, and made him set up and work off a lot of caution notices for despatch to the various postmasters and letter-receivers by the night and morning mails, sent out and secured a staff of clerks to fold and envelope these notices, and took the following measures to ascertain the extent of the frauds and to prevent any repetition of it extending, and to ensure the capture of the offender if such repetition were attempted.

The money-order accounts of the London branch receivers (four hundred in number), which had come in by the last despatch of Saturday night were opened and examined, and in them were found, in all, fifty-seven orders for ten pounds each, purporting to be of Higher Brickey issue, which had been cashed on Saturday at twelve money-order offices in the east of London. It was then ascertained, by inquiry of these receivers, that two persons, one a short dark man, the other a tall fair man, had been concerned in the presentation of these orders; that the dark man had visited some and the fair man other offices, that at the money-order office in Limehouse they had been seen in company under the following circumstances. The fair man, in the first instance, went alone to the receiving-office in Limehouse,

and presented five Higher Brickey money-orders for ten pounds each; the letter-receiver had but thirty pounds in hand, and therefore stated that he could cash three only of the orders, but that he would apply to the chief office for funds to cash the remainder. The fair man, after some conversation, took the thirty pounds for three of the orders and went away, but returned almost immediately with the dark man, who had in his hand a further bundle of money-orders drawn on another office (the business of which had been transferred to the Limehouse office), for which he demanded payment. As the receiver was unable, for the reasons before given, to cash any more orders, the dark man abused him violently, and the altercation which ensued was so warm and noisy as to draw a crowd round the office. At length the receiver said he would send a telegram to the chief office for funds, and if the man would call at four in the afternoon they should be paid. On this they left him, and never returned. Stupid fools they were to do this, for from this very Limehouse receiver we obtained what afterwards proved to be a tolerably accurate description of the two men, and we also obtained the numbers of several Bank of England notes which had been paid to them. So far, so good. But the postmaster of Waterbridge having stated that three hundred money-orders had been stolen, of which, as we knew, but fifty-seven had been cashed, it seemed reasonable to suppose that further attempts to cash some of the remaining orders would be made early on Monday morning. So with a view to defeat any such attempts, the principal postmasters throughout the kingdom were instructed forthwith to detain any person who should present money-orders of Higher Brickey issue, and to despatch similar instructions to their sub-postmasters. A force of sorters and letter-carriers was despatched to every money-order office in London with similar instructions.

The carrying out of these arrangements occupied us nearly the whole of Sunday night, but they were so effectually completed by an early hour on Monday morning, that any person who had then presented a Higher Brickey money order at any money-order office would assuredly have been detained; indeed, the holder of a genuine Higher Brickey order was pounced upon by our people at Birmingham, and detained at the office until the postmaster had received instructions to let him go. No attempt was, however, made to utter any more of the forged orders, although, as we ascertained early on Monday morning, thirty-three forged advices of such orders were lying at six money-order offices in the east of London. Before the close of Monday it became evident that the perpetrators of the fraud, alarmed probably by the offer of the Limehouse clerk to telegraph for funds, had made up their minds to rest contented, for a time at least, with the plunder which they had obtained. As, however, it seemed by no means improbable that they would, in a little time, attempt to pass off some of the stolen orders on

tradesmen in exchange for goods, we had some cautionary notices framed, and distributed by the agency of the police, in which London tradesmen were warned that any money order which purported to be of Higher Brickey issue must be regarded as forged, and that the person presenting it must be detained.

Precautions taken, it now became necessary to take steps for the detection of the offenders. From a report which we received from the postmaster of Waterbridge, on the morning of Monday, the 15th of May, we derived some information as to the mode in which the money orders had been obtained from the post-office at Higher Brickey, and from the same source we obtained a description of the man who had thus obtained the orders, and of a confederate who waited for him at Waterbridge, whose description tallied closely with the description of the two men who had cashed the orders in London. A little communication with the police superintendent at the Great Western (we know every man in the force worth knowing, whether in public or private service), and a little cross-examination of the night porters, enabled us to trace the arrival of these two men at Paddington, from Waterbridge, on the morning of Saturday, the 13th of May. But though we thus found reason to suppose that the offenders were only two in number, were located in London, and would ultimately be found in London, it still seemed desirable that the search for them should be commenced in Higher Brickey and Waterbridge. It appeared probable that the men must have been induced to select a place so little known as Higher Brickey for the scene of their operations by some motive personal to themselves—by previous knowledge, for instance, of the place or of the sub-postmaster—and it was reasonable to expect that we should ascertain by inquiry on the spot, first, these motives for the selection of Higher Brickey, and thence by whom the fraud had been committed. So, with my mind filled with all the facts, so far as we knew them, and with certain ideas of how to work them, I went down to Waterbridge, and when I returned I was enabled to lay before the heads of the department the following statement:

On the evening of Thursday, the 11th of May, two men, the one short and dark, the other tall and fair, arrived in Waterbridge from Lowbridge, where, during the day, they had endeavoured, without success, to obtain a fly to convey them to Higher Brickey. They had been drinking rather freely in Lowbridge, and had become loquacious and incautious. On arriving in Waterbridge, they went to the Commercial Hotel, where the fair man remained for the night. The dark man, after asking the boots of the Commercial whether Mrs. Dean still kept the White Hart, and being answered in the affirmative, went to the White Hart and engaged a bed for the night. In the course of the evening he inquired of the attendants for more than one old inhabitant of Waterbridge, and he made special inquiry after one Anne Love, who had been, as he said, a servant to

his father. Later in the evening he went out and sought out two women of the town, whom he accosted as old acquaintances, but they did not recognise him, so to one of them he introduced himself as "Harry Morris," asking her, at the same time, not to mention that she had seen him. Before he went to bed he gave orders that a gig should be in readiness next morning at nine o'clock to take him to Higher Brickey. But on the following morning he had slept off his liquor, and was much less communicative; and when he set out for Higher Brickey, in the gig, he cautiously avoided the principal street, and took a circuitous route through by-lanes. After calling at a shop in Bannington, a village through which he passed, and purchasing a sheet of blotting-paper and a chamois leather, he drove to the post-office at Higher Brickey, accosted the sub-postmaster by name, and desired to be shown into a private room, and declared himself to be an inspector from the General Post-office in London. He had come down, he said, specially to investigate circumstances connected with the loss of several letters which had been posted at this office, and taking some red-tape-tied documents from his bag, he read, or pretended to read, complaints from several gentlemen who actually lived in the neighbourhood, and from a Mr. Hamilton, of Camden Town, who, he said, had already written to the sub-postmaster. Denying the imputations of the resident gentry, the sub-postmaster was compelled to confess that he had been in correspondence with Mr. Hamilton (I ascertained afterwards that Mr. Hamilton was Morris himself, who had entered into correspondence with the official for the purpose of making himself acquainted with his writing, and practising a forgery of his signature), and the "gentleman from London," after severely rating the unfortunate man, told him that he should "institute a test," and that for the purposes of this test the postmaster must attend to his orders for a week.

The postmaster demurred at first, but, impressed by the accurate official knowledge of the inspector from London, and awed by his demeanour, finally consented to do his bidding. The inspector then asked the postmaster at what time the night mail would be despatched, and, on learning the hour, stated he should be present to see the mail made up, and that, meanwhile, he should prepare a "test letter" on which he should require the postmaster to place a private mark for future identification, for despatch by that mail. Then, producing another bundle of papers from his black bag, he began to question the postmaster as to the nature and extent of his money-order business, and on learning that on an average about fifteen orders per week were issued, he said that under the existing system the disparity between the numbers of orders issued at small offices and the numbers issued at such offices as Liverpool and Manchester caused much inconvenience to the chief office, where all the numbers were registered by machinery, that an important alteration was about

to be made, and that he had been instructed to take from the postmaster his stock of blank orders and notices, and leave him no more than would suffice until the 16th of May, when the alteration would take effect. He thus obtained from the postmaster one complete book, containing two hundred money orders and advices, and one hundred orders and advices from another book. The complete book, he said, would be at once forwarded by him to London, but it would be necessary that the postmaster should affix the dated stamp of his office to those orders and advices, with a view to cancel them, and to mark the date on which they were removed from Higher Brickey. The postmaster did so accordingly.

Having thus obtained the orders and advices, the gentleman from London informed the postmaster that he was going on to pursue his inquiries at a neighbouring office, and that he should return in the evening with the test-letter, which he should himself place in the mail-bag, and that, until his arrival, no other letters were to be placed in that bag. I found out he never went to any other office, but drove off to a tavern called the Castle of Comfort, a few miles off, in a quiet out-of-the-way spot, where he occupied himself in filling up the orders and advices. He came back to Higher Brickey at the appointed time to see the mail made up, brought his test letter with him, and made the postmaster keep his door shut, and serve any of the public that applied through a little sliding panel, such as you have often seen in country offices. He had tremendous luck, too, this gentleman from London, for the poor postmaster was constantly called away to serve the public with stamps and to answer inquiries, and on one occasion had to rush out and seize the pretended inspector's horse, which was frightened at the passing of a volunteer band. During these temporary absences of the postmaster, the inspector no doubt contrived to slip the advices into the bag, and possibly to stamp each lot on the back. He then saw the mail off, and on bidding the postmaster farewell, announced his intention of keeping a sharp eye on the mail-cart driver in front of him. On reaching Waterbridge, he was joined by the tall fair man who had been waiting about at the different inns all day, and they both started for London together.

It was of course plain enough that the dark man was the prime mover in the affair, that he did all the work that required clever handling, and that the fair man was a mere common thief—he had “let out” a little when the drink was in him—but that the dark man was of a much higher order than a mere “magsman.” So the first thing to do was to find out who the dark man was. There was a little humpy ostler at the White Hart, a cunning little chap, who had taken a great deal of notice of this dark man. It was from him I learned that the stranger had asked after Anne Love, and mentioned that she had lived as servant with his father; and it was through him that I was brought face to face

with Anne Love, then married and doing well. She had only been in three situations before she got married, she said, and only in one where there had been sons in the family. Where was that? That was at Morris's. (I felt I was hot on the scent then, for my dark friend had told one of the women that he was “Harry Morris.”) How many sons were there at Morris's? Two; one of them went to Australia, and the other was put in prison for robbing the Post-office. For robbing the Post-office! The man, without a doubt—out of prison, and trying his old game again! I had to get back to London as quickly as possible; but, before I left Waterbridge, I gathered certain particulars of his history from some people who corresponded with Morris's parents, who had fallen into poverty and left Waterbridge for London; and I identified my dark friend with Harry Morris, who was a clerk in the Waterbridge post-office, but was dismissed for irregular and dissolute conduct in the year 1849. In '51 he contrived to steal the Waterbridge mail-bag from the railway platform, which projected about three feet over the plane of the railway, by hiding under the platform, and hooking off the bags when the mail messenger was looking another way. Morris was a green hand then, for he tried to pass off some notes, which proved part of the plunder, himself, and he was given into custody at Bristol, tried at Taunton in the spring of '52, and sentenced to ten years' penal. He got his ticket of leave in '56, but was trapped again for uttering base coin, and had nine months for the new offence, and to work out the remainder of his original sentence. During his second term of imprisonment he sustained some injury, and lost the sight of one of his eyes. If I had any doubt of his identity, this settled it, as the daughter of the sub-postmaster at Higher Brickey had told me the dark man had a marked peculiarity in his right eye.

I came back to town with all this information, and it was decided that the first thing to be done was to watch the house in which Morris's parents lived. That was a job for the police, and they were communicated with; and as it happened that Morris's parents were desirous of letting an unfurnished room in their house, the police were told to find a trustworthy woman to take it and furnish it, to be very friendly with the old people, and to be always ready with an open bottle of gin, if either of them should step up-stairs for a chat. The plan answered well. The trustworthy woman was as sharp as a needle; old Mrs. Morris was as reticent as a sieve. The gin-and-water was always on the table, and within a very few days we ascertained that Morris had written to his mother, enclosing her some postage stamps, giving her a fictitious account of his proceedings, and asking her to address her reply to “J. Henry, Post-office, Edgeware-road.” As ill-luck would have it, there are two post-offices in the Edgeware-road, and though the detectives were told to remain one at one office, the other at the other, after a day or two they went jointly to the office at

which the letter for Morris was lying, and left the other office unprotected. On the evening of Thursday, the 25th of May, Morris sent to the post-office at which the letter and the detectives were *not* waiting for him, and asked for the letter. The receiver, instead of attempting to detain him, contented himself with looking through two or three bundles of letters, and stating that he had no such letter, but that it would probably be found at the other post-office in the Edgware-road. Morris, on learning this, went away, saying he would call at the other office, but instead of doing so he sent, the next morning, his accomplice, the tall fair man, who, after receiving the letter, was followed by the detectives and taken into custody, just one fortnight after the date of his visit to Waterbridge. If anything had been wanting to prove that the pretended inspector who visited Higher Brickey was no other than Henry Morris, formerly a clerk in the Waterbridge post-office, the capture of the inspector's confederate, with a letter from the mother of Morris to her son, would have settled the question.

The tall fair man, who was called "Needle Tommy"—but who called himself John Wilson—was tried, and got ten years' penal; and, as his trial was in the papers, there was little doubt that Morris would read of it, would not again venture to communicate with his mother, and would attempt to escape from London. To prevent his escape, we sent a description of him to every metropolitan railway station, to every important junction station within fifty miles of London, to every seaport, and to every large provincial town. We ascertained that not only was his eye affected, but that he was distinguishable by a congenital contraction of the little finger of his left hand. We obtained his photograph from the police authorities, and three hundred copies of that photograph were distributed amongst the principal officers in town and country, and amongst the inspectors and ticket-takers at the principal railway stations. We sent detectives to Epsom, Ascot, and Hampton races, and a watch was kept at every theatre, music-hall, and dancing-saloon in London.

And all to no purpose. The police were wonderfully active, but not very perspicuous. One-eyed men were being taken up all over the country, it not being taken into account that the little fingers of their left hands were all straight, and that in no other respect did they answer the description of Morris. A one-eyed man on Newhaven pier, walking to the Dieppe boat, had to answer many questions before he was permitted to embark. A one-eyed Jew fruiterer, going to Margate for a holiday, spent his evening in the station-house instead of at the Tivoli Gardens, until he satisfied the authorities. From Walsall and Chelmsford, from Newcastle-on-Tyne and from Horsemonger-lane Jail, we received information that Morris was arrested, but investigation cleared up the story, and Morris was still at large. How to get him? how to get him? We were all fairly

done, when a brilliant thought came across me, and we acted on it at once.

When Morris was in prison at Woking, he wrote to a "Mr. Naylor, 38, Suffolk-street, Middlesex Hospital," and represented Naylor to be his brother. We knew very well that this was false, and concluded that Naylor must have been a prison companion of Morris's, and we therefore thought it probable that if we could find Naylor we should find Morris. So I went to the dead-letter office, where there are hundreds of photographs taken out of letters which could not be delivered for want of address or other cause, and I picked out one of a prettyish, fastish-looking girl, and I enclosed it in a letter, which ran thus:

"Captain Flash, of our place, will call on you in a few days. The Rosebud wants you to give him the enclosed, and ask him to write to her at the old place. Yours, J. Murray."

This letter was addressed to Naylor, was registered, and given to a letter-carrier with instructions not to part with it until he got a receipt from Naylor himself. Within twenty-four hours, the man brought back Naylor's receipt and an accurate description of Naylor himself. We told the detectives of this, and if they had done as they were told we should have had Morris and Naylor together; but they will *not* take a hint, and so my little game was for a time—only for the time, mind—of no use.

But we got him at last. On the 29th of June, nine days after the delivery of the registered letter to Naylor, the solicitor to the post-office in Dublin telegraphed to the effect that Morris and two other men, after obtaining goods from Dublin tradesmen in exchange for forged money orders of Higher Brickey issue, had been arrested at Malahide, near Dublin. From further reports of the case, it appeared that on the morning of the 28th of June Morris visited the shops of three of the principal mercers in Dublin, and selected at each shop goods to the value of about twenty-five pounds. The tradesmen were one and all charmed with his politeness. He appeared, they said, to have very good taste and a thorough knowledge of the value of the articles he selected, but, with the modesty which is always inseparable from true genius, he expressed doubts as to his own powers of selection, and said that he would leave the choice to the tradesmen, in the conviction that any article which he purchased of firms so eminent must be of the best quality. When he had made his purchases, he, in each case, desired that the goods might be retained for him until the evening, when he would call and pay for them. He also asked in each case to be directed to the post-office. He returned in the evening to each shop, and made profuse apologies for being after his time. He had been detained, he said, at dinner by some friends whose hospitality was overwhelming. He had also been quite put out by the discovery that the Money-order Office in Dublin closed at four o'clock. In England much more accommodation was given to the public. He had relied upon

finding the post-office in Dublin open, as he had intended to cash some money orders there; but he must now ask that these orders might be taken in payment for the goods which he had purchased, and that he might have the balance in cash. His story was so plausible and good, that from these three tradesmen he got about seventy-five pounds in goods and seventy-five pounds in money.

You would have thought that that would have contented him for the time, but they are cormorants, these fellows, and always come to grief by overreaching. That same evening, in fact before his second visit to Repps and Grodynapp's, one of the mercers' shops, Morris and two other men went to a public-house and called for some sherry. They got it, and liked it so much that they offered to buy a dozen if the landlord would change a money-order for ten pound. The landlord, who was rather staggered at hearing his sherry praised, made some difficulty with regard to the money order, on which Morris offered him a sovereign to cash the order. This roused the landlord's suspicions at once, and he declined. The three men shortly afterwards left the public-house, and Morris went to complete his purchase at the shop of Repps and Grodynapp. But, unfortunately for him, it happened that a young man in the employ of Repps and Grodynapp was drinking at the bar of the public-house where Morris attempted to pass off the money order on the landlord, and heard all that went on. As he entered his employer's shop, he was met by the cashier, who told him he had just done an excellent stroke of business, having sold goods to the amount of twenty-five pounds, and having been paid for them with money orders to the value of fifty pounds, so that he had been compelled to pay the balance to the purchaser in cash. He added, that the porter was just then in the act of putting the goods on the car for the purchaser. On learning this, the first young man went to look at the purchaser, and found him to be no other than the man who had just attempted to pass off a money order at the public-house. He communicated what he knew to the cashier, and they both thought it so suspicious that they followed the man from place to place in Dublin, and hence to Malahide, where, after communication with the post-office solicitor, they had them arrested. On Morris was found the stamp with which the forged money orders had been stamped, and which had been formed by packing loose types in a piece of brass tube, and securing them in their places with sealing-wax. The permanent stamp merely contained the words "Higher Brickey," but the thieves were supplied with loose types for the dates.

The two men who were with Morris called

themselves Chesterfield and Martin. In Chesterfield's pocket was found a chamois leather (probably that which Morris had purchased) and a bottle of printer's ink. On the leather were impressions of the loose types which had been used to complete the stamped impressions on the money-orders, and Chesterfield was thus clearly connected with the fraud. There was more difficulty about Martin. He had been seen to drink with the other two men, and to assist in carrying their trunks; but he declared they had employed him, and that he had never seen them before. His story was so far a plausible one, that the magistrate before whom they were taken was disposed to discharge him; but, fortunately, at this juncture the registered letter which we had caused to be delivered to Naylor nine days before was found in the pocket of Martin's coat. The Dublin solicitor could not tell what to make of the letter, but, thinking it might furnish us with a clue to the rest of the gang, sent me a copy, and of course I at once perceived that we had caught Naylor as well as Morris. I accordingly went over to Dublin, taking with me the letter-carrier who had delivered the registered letter to Naylor, and a constable who knew Naylor, and these two men identified Martin as Naylor without hesitation.

They were tried at the September assizes, convicted, and sentenced, Morris to twenty years', Naylor to ten, and the third man to six years' penal servitude. I believe care has been taken to prevent Mr. Morris coming out before the expiration of his time. He was certainly one of the most cunning and most daring thieves that the Post-office had ever to contend against.

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